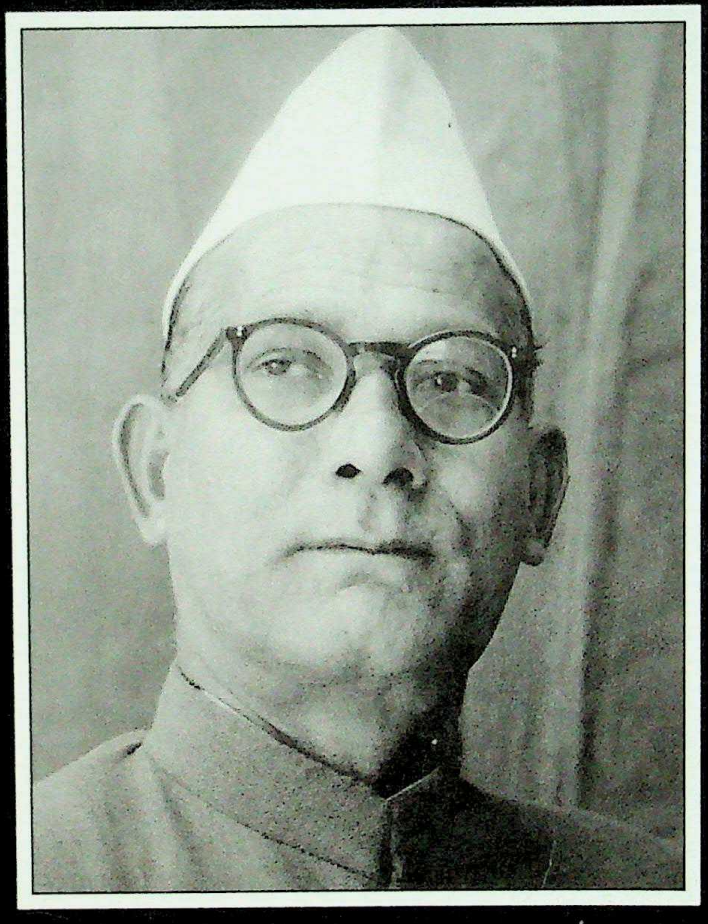
COMMEMORATIVE VOLUME



LALA MULK RAJ SARAF

(Father of Journalism in Jammu and Kashmir)

1894-1989

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

اظہار حال ملکی خاص اس کا مدعا ہے
رنبیر نام کا یہ جام جہاں نما ہے

ریاست جموں و کشمیر کا پہلا اخبار

رجسٹرڈ ایل نمبر ۱۶۷۷

تار کا پتہ

رنبیر جموں

رنبیر

ہفتہ وار

قیمت سالانہ ششماہی

قیمت فی پرچہ ۱ر

اڈیٹر

منیجر

ملک راج صراف بی اے

نمبر ۱ | جموں منگلوار ۱۱ ہاڑ سنہ ۱۹۸۱ مطابق ۲۴ جون سنہ ۱۹۲۴ | جلد ۱

پرزہ کاغذ کا نہیں ہے یہ نشان رنبیر

پیغام مبارک

ولایت سے آواز

The title-page of the very first issue of the RANBIR
dated June 24, 1924

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Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

COMMEMORATIVE VOLUME

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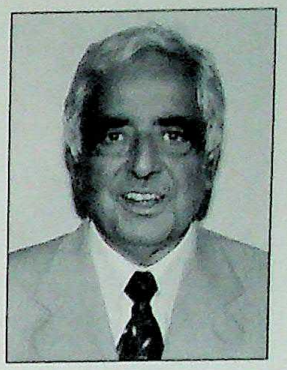

CHIEF MINISTER
JAMMU & KASHMIR

MESSAGE

Lala Mulk Raj Saraf has rightly been called the father of journalism in Jammu and Kashmir. He was not merely a pioneer in the field of media but epitomized a set of values that made him an institution by hiself.

Anything done to commemorate Lalaji is a service to the state and journalism.

(Mufti Mohammad Sayeed)

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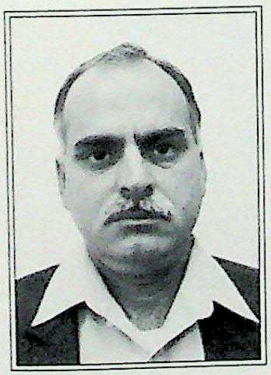
From the Editor's desk

It is always inspirational to recollect the feats of the Greats and that is what guided us— the followers of Lala Mulk Raj Saraf— to remember his cherished values and contributions and be guided by them. One thing which encouraged us to do so was his modesty, undying spirit and willingness to advice and guide the juniors and freshers be it in the field of journalism, politics or for that matter any other avocation which the greenhorns chose to pursue.

It is rare to come across such a multifaceted personality who despite singular achievements in various fields was not for a moment detached either from his very modest past or the harsh ground realities encountered by Lalaji since his childhood. And what is more striking about his personality was his ability to remain unfazed in the face of stiff challenges and zeal to convert tribulations into an opportunity to grow. Lalaji did it and did it with aplomb. Rest is history which is there for us to peruse and draw lessons from.

To describe such a great personality in few words— as we have attempted through this Commemorative Volume— is as great an injustice to Lalaji as showering laurels on him which he abhorred even during his decades long public life. His capacity to struggle for a cause was as phenomenal as his craving for the establishment of an equitable and just society for which he never hesitated to take the powers be of the time head-on. Lalaji believed more in what was beneficial to the State of Jammu and Kashmir and its people and less in utilising the circumstances to his personal benefits. A fearless crusader—— the pages of history confirm it—— he was an epitome of objectivity even while criticising high and mighty if he was convinced that their acts were against the State and its people.

Rightly described the 'FATHER OF JOURNALISM' in Jammu and Kashmir, the lesser mortals like the writer owe their existence to him for it was Lalaji?s insight that he thought of introducing journalism in the State when the majority would not even comprehend what it meant.



Anil Anand

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What better way to do this but by launching a newspaper and train a brigade of reporters to guard the society? And how dreadful such an entrepreneurial thought would have been in the face of hostile ground realities and an era devoid of technical advancement and good means of communication?

Undeterred, Lalaji cared less for such impediments and more for the social responsibilities which he wished to discharge through the medium of "Ranbir"; the first Urdu weekly newspaper of Jammu and Kashmir launched by him in 1924. We have reproduced his book? 'Fifty years of Journalism' in the Commemorative Volume for the readers to have a first-hand insight of what went into the making of 'Ranbir' its goals and how hard Lalaji struggled to keep the flame of freedom of the press burning.

He was unsparing in criticising his friends in the higher echelons of powers if convinced that there acts were detrimental to the society's interest or that they were bent on muzzling the freedom of the press.

Lalaji's contributions were not confined only to the field of journalism. But he converted his standing as a journalist into an opportunity to be heard in the socio-political shaping of the State in the pre and post-Independence eras. The hall-mark of his crusade on socio-politcal front was his clamour to strengthen the diversities of the State for it to emerge as a cohesive unit. It is for everyone to see that he did this not for any personal gains but for the well-being of the State and its people.

One has no hesitation to say that important ingredients of Lalaji's personality were hard work, simplicity and compassion. There is much more to it. But it is beyond a lesser mortal to delve into various facets of his personality. Let me leave it at that and request you to formulate your own view after reading section-I of the Commemorative Volume. One has no doubt that in the ultimate analysis of his personality all of you will concur with the above words.

Reminding you, it is not necessary to concur. The debate is the essence of democracy for which Lalaji fought throughout his life. The homage need not be in terms of laurels but healthy criticism also. Both achievements and failures of such a great personality have a lesson or two for the coming generations.

A word about section-II of the Commemorative Volume. It was decided to use it as an open forum for debate so far as the topicality of the articles is concerned. Eminent personalities from diverse fields were requested to write on any aspect of Jammu and Kashmir so that their views could help in the process to build Jammu and Kashmir of Lalaji?s dream where the institution of journalism becomes stronger than ever before.

Homage to the undying spirit of Lalaji and a vow to follow his values of simplicity, hard work and compassion.

(Anil Anand)

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CITATION

Shri Mulk Raj Saraf (81) is a veteran journalist of Jammu and Kashmir, with a career of half a century of distinguished journalism as well as social service to his credit.

Shri Saraf graduated in 1919 and thereafter abandoned a law course at Lahore to start his journalistic career as a sub-editor of the famed nationalist newspaper, 'Bande Matram' under Lala Lajpat Rai. In 1924, Shri Saraf founded, as Editor, the very first newspaper in Jammu & Kashmir under the name 'Ranbir'. Later, as an advocate of the freedom struggle, the paper had its share of troubles when its publication was banned in 1930 because of its allegedly "subversive propaganda" in connection with Mahatama Gandhi's arrest at that time. The 'Ranbir' re-appeared in 1931 when the seeds of the political urge for a responsible government were beginning to germinate. The paper lent full support to the movement. Once again the paper was banned in June 1947 for its strong advocacy of the demand for the State's accession to India. It re-appeared in September that year and in critical times that followed, 'Ranbir' played an important role in mobilising popular resistance against Pakistani aggression. Between 1934 and 1947 Shri Saraf also brought out 'Rattan' which was the foremost Urdu journal for children.

Now in his eighties, Shri Mulk Raj Saraf continues to be active, interested in original and diverse forms of journalism. He has published nearly half a dozen books throwing light on various facets of the life of the State. Recently, Shri Saraf has gifted to the Jammu University, for research, all the files of the 'Ranbir' and 'Rattan'

Shri Saraf has always associated himself with larger social causes of a constructive character.

With his long and distinguished services in the cause of journalism, Shri Saraf is rightly regarded as the father of journalism in Jammu and Kashmir.

[THIS CITATION WAS READ OUT AS MR. MULK RAJ SARAF WAS AWARDED PADMA SHRI BY THE PRESIDENT AT THE DURBAR HALL OF RASHTRAPATI BHAWAN ON APRIL 3, 1976].

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FIFTY YEARS

AS A

JOURNALIST

A saga in journalism dating back to the times when applying for permission to bring out a newspaper was looked upon as an act against the State.

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PREFACE

Right from the year 1920 onward, the State of Jammu and Kashmir has passed through many a vicissitude. From autocracy it has been transformed into a democracy as an integral part of the largest democracy in the world. It has been my proud privilege to be an eye-witness to, if not an active participant in, all this great change. Not only this, I have had also the honour of contributing my humble bit in the development of what has come to be known as the Fourth Estate of the Realm.

It is now nearly five decades that I have been experimenting with journalism in Jammu and Kashmir. In the pages that follow, I have made an attempt to narrate my victories as also to indicate my set-backs in my fight for journalism.

If the study of my trials and turmoils, successes and failures, as embodied in this book may enable a journalist to discover himself even to a slight degree and lead him on to the road –

Though long and dreary

To foot it bravely, strong or weary,

I would consider my labour amply rewarded.

The present volume is only a part of a bigger work, a LOOK AT THE LAST FIFTY YEARS, which may take some more time to complete.

In the preparation of the book, I have been ably assisted by my sons Om, Suraj and Prem. From start to finish they spared no pains to see the book through.

The Governor Dr. Karan Singh (now Union Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation) has very kindly written the Introduction.

I am grateful to the Chief Minister, Khawaja Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq for going through the manuscript and writing the Foreword.

by

Mulk Raj Saraf

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The messages sent by the Acting governor Mr. Janki Nath Wazir (Chief Justice) and Shri M.A. Ansari, formerly Chief Justic, Kerala High Court and Chairman Anti-Corruption commission J & K State are thankfully acknowledged.

A word more. Like most journalists and publicmen, I have had also my share of suffering but how much sufferings – physical, mental and financial that saintly woman, my partner in life, Shrimati Gian Devi, has undergone because of me, would never be known. I would not have been what I am today, without her.

Jammu May 1, 1967.

Mulk Raj Saraf

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EARLY YEARS

I was born on April 8, 1894 at Samba in Jammu District. In the first decade of my life I cannot find any spectacular factors which might have been the shadows of any coming events. My grandfather, Shri Kalu Shah, was a jeweller. On account of his avocation our family came to be surnamed as Saraf. My father, Shri Daya Ram Saraf, however, ran a drapery and general merchandise establishment. We were five brothers. At the turn of the present century plague epidemic played havoc with our family : my father and two elder brothers, Shri Faqir Chand and Shri Khushi Ram, were no more. Shortly afterwards, my mother, Shrimati Jamna Devi, too, took to her heavenly abode. She came from a respectable family of Zafarwal in Sialkot District (now in Pakistan). Two years later my younger brother Ganda Mal also passed away. My elder brother Shri Karam Chand Saraf and myself were the only survivors of the family. He was then eleven years of age, and I two years younger. He died in March 1964 at the age of 72.

We were looked after by our uncle Shri Mangtu Shah. He opened a small shop for my elder brother, who, from the very start, seemed nimble-witted and clever. On account of domestic handicaps I could not begin my education early; therefore, I tried to sit on the shop. My inclination, however, was averse to shopkeeping. Time and again, I crammed Dogri letters and Mahajani arithmatic but every time they soon eluded my memory.

In that hopeless milieu I became eleven years old. An ordinary event at this juncture completely changed the course of my life. In 1905, the Prince of Wales, who afterwards became the king George V of the United Kingdom, came on a trip to India and also visited Jammu. In his honour numerous functions were arranged including distribution of sweets etcetera in the Educational Institutions. Perhaps, attracted by that I joined the local school.

Having started my education at a somewhat advanced age, I had many advantages, both physical and mental. I was much respected by my class-mates. I was also an obedient pupil. Once I carried quite ungrudgingly a load of over a maund of vegetables on my head straight from Jammu to Samba, a distance of 25 miles which I had to cover on foot (in absence of any vehiclar traffic there in those days) in two consecutive days simply because I had been asked by my school teachers to bring for each of them fresh vegetables from the capital city, of course, in lieu of cash price paid in advance by them. Rather, I felt proud and content,

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within myself, for having accomplished the task for allotment of which, out of all the students, I alone had, as I rightly claimed, the privilege and pleasure to be singled out.

When I had reached fourth primary class, my uncle gave my elder brother his share from the common family property. My brother, thereupon, migrated to a nearby village. Not unoften, I had to take on private tution or perform odd jobs to meet my expenses for books and clothes. When I passed my fifth class, my uncle tried to get me recruited as a field map measurer in the Land Settlement Department but that was not to be.

In the meantime, I developed taste for reading newspapers. The father of one of my class-mates was a postman. In those days two Lahore Urdu weeklies *viz*., the Rajput Gazette and the Akbar-i-Aam used to reach Samba. The postman, a Rajput, subscribed for the Rajput Gazette which I used to go though zealously in his house. My penchant for newspaper study increased to such an extent that I hardly let a day pass without reading one newspaper or the other.

In 1913 I passed my middle school examination. Luckily that very year, high classes were started in Samba and I joined the ninth class. I was awarded a monthly scholarship of rupees four. My elder brother meanwhile re-migrated to Samba where he soon secured a lucrative business. With his increasing prosperity he deeply felt my separation. At last one day I left my uncle and entered my ancestral house. My brother appeared relieved and his wife celebrated it as an auspicious occasion.

In 1915, at the age of 21, I passed my matriculation examination. But I had already joined as an officiating Laboratory Assistant in the Samba High School at Rs. 12/- per month soon after taking the examination. On account of my poor health I was reluctant to continue my studies. My brother who was extremely pleased with my success in the annual examination, however, insisted on my joining the College. I obeyed him.

Thus in the year 1915, I joined the Prince of Wales College, now named the Government Gandhi Memorial College, Jammu. I made full use of the library and the reading room there. Having the opportunity to study so many newspapers and magazines, free of cost, I felt immense pleasure and read avidly. Newspaper study soon began to turn into hobby for journalism. I wrote my first article for the College periodical, Tawi, in 1915. My interest in the political and social conditions of the State also began to develop fast. Once or twice I wrote for the Kashmiri Magazine published from Lahore. The editor and proprietor of that paper was the renowned literateur, poet and historian, Moulvi Mohd-ud-Din Fauq, with whom I had very friendly contemporaneous connections in the later years.

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Once our Professor of History, Shri T.L. Magarmilani, questioned me in the class about my programme in life after leaving the college. I expressed my brame to see four things in the State, viz. a newspaper, a legislative assembly, a university and a bank. By the grace of the Almighty, Jammu and Kashmir has since advanced in all these directions and I have the satisfaction of having contributed my bit to all of them in their embryonic stages.

I can never forget an incident in my life which happened towards the end of my college career. Due to the martial law conditions in the Pubjab following the fateful days of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, our centre for the degree examination (1919) had been shifted from Lahore to Sialkot where I was staying with a friend of mine, Shri Ram Rakha Mal Mahajan. I fell sick during the examination days and was much reduced physically. Nevertheless I continued to sit in the examination, of course, with little hope of success. The Superintendent of the Examination was the Principal of the Mission College Sialkot – a noble englishman. One day when I had done with my Economics Paper A, I handed it over to the Superintendent as usual. At once a thought struck me that I had made a serious blunder which needed to be rectified . So I earnestly requested the Superintendent that I wanted my answer-book back for a few seconds to correct a word or two therein. The Superintendent was kind enough to return it for doing the needful. While going through the paper hurriedly in the presence of the Superintendent and changing a word here and there, I found one whole paragraph erroneous which made my reply to other parts of the same question meaningless. Without being noticed by the Superintendent I erased the whole paragraph and handed back the answer-book to him. Returning to my residence I began to prepare for the Economics Paper B for the next day. But I found myself upset. My peace of mind had gone. The thought weighted heavily upon my mind, nay upon my soul, that beyond correcting a word or two, I had committed a breach of faith and hence a sin by erasing the paragraph without bringing it to the notice of the Superintendent. I tried to console myself by arguing out in my mind in a hundred and one ways but in vain. The thought of having behaved rather misbehaved, in the way I did, haunted me in everything I wanted to do that afternoon. I was unable to pursue my studies any more and could not even properly attend to my illness; the ailment in me seemed to have left me for the while.

At long last, thought flashed across my mind. Why should I not got to the Superintendent, confess my guilt and seek his blessing? The very thought of it soothened my mind. It was evening time. I straightaway went to the Mission College to find out where the Principal (Superintendent) lived. As it was getting dark I almost ran towards the residence of the

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Principal which was situated in the cantonment area. Due to the martial law the whole atmosphere was surcharged with suspicion and fear. An Indian youth strolling in a cantonment area – White man's enclave in British Raj–at odd hours? I was actually questioned by a sentry here and a sentry there but I succeeded each time in proving my bona fides that as a candidate in the degree examination that was on in the City, I urgently needed to meet the Principal. I was allowed to proceed till I reached the destination. On seeing me the Principal enquired as to what had brought me there. I related to him the story of my said plight and asked for his pardon. That noble Englishman very humbly yet touchingly observed "Ask His pardon Who pardons us all". He did not utter a word more. For a moment I stood motionless and then thought of Him who pardons us all. And, I found the solution to my entire satisfaction then and there. I bowed to the Principal and came back greatly relieved and calmly pursued my work. The next day after I had done my paper, I erased with my pen one whole answer which I considered to be the best done and from which I expected the highest marks. Thus, I atoned for the Sin which I had committed the previous day. This was actually the solution that had struck me at the time of my meeting with the Principal when he had advised me to 'ask His pardon Who pardons us all'. Yet another happy paradox was that notwithstanding my early diffidence about my success in the degree examination chiefly due to my failure to do full justice to my question papers on the whole, coupled with my illness during the examination days, I felt not merely unburdened but so completely convinced within myself the moment I destroyed my best answer as a measure of my expiation, that no power on earth henceforth could fail me. I was indeed placed in high second class when the degree examination results were announced after two months.

After I had got through my degree examination in 1919, my respected brother again desired that I should proceed on in my studies. He advised me to join the Law College, Lahore. In fact, he wanted to see me a Judge after my law course. I, however, had no inclination for the law as I had none for the shopkeeping. Yet I had to follow the desire of my brother, and it did benefit me ultimately though in a different way.

In the wake of material law the Punjab had been shaken in its entrails. The top material personalities frequently used to visit Lahore and Amritsar. I considered it my good luck to be so close to the leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak, Dr. Anne Besant, Lala Rajpat Rai, Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, Pandit Madan Mohan Malavya, Dr. Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Swami Shradha Nandji, Shri C.R. Das, Babu Bipan Paul, Maulana Azad, Maulana Mohd. Ali, Sardar Patel, Shri Srinivasa Shastri and Baba Kharak Singh and hear their inspiring ideas. Pandit

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Jawaharlal Nehru and Netaji Subhash Chander Bose were not so much renowned then. I also attended the historic session of the Congress at Amritsar in December 1919 and had an opportunity to meet many Congress leaders.

On Account of such pre-occupations I could not devote much attention to Law studies. Consequently, I could not get through the annual test. Those were also the days of non-cooperation movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi. So, I succeeded in persuading my brother not to press me to rejoin the Law College. Thus, It became free from the 'Varsity education at the age of Twenty six.

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JOURNALIST IN THE MAKING

While I was getting increasingly disinclined to pursue my Law studies at Lahore, Lala Lajpat Rai, after his return from exile in America, started his famous daily newspaper, the Bande Matram. Like the Lion of the Punjab, as Lalaji was popularly called, the Bande Matram soon became a household word throughout the Urdu-knowing world. I felt deeply attracted by his powerful personality and equally powerful pen.

Fortunately, I got an opportunity to come closer to him. I offered my services for a vacancy under him. A test was held and I was appointed as a sub-editor on the staff of the paper in the early 1920. It was, indeed, my initiation in active journalism. But I could not stick there for long.

Awakening and bustle in Lahore, time and again, reminded me of the helplessness of the people of my own State. The question continuously itched me : if Lahore alone could provide scope for so many newspapers, could not the vast State of Jammu and Kashmir afford even a single newspaper ? I often lost myself in building cloud castles of journalism in Jammu and Kashmir, while working in the Bande Matram. Once or twice getting leave from my office, I actually visited Jammu to study the local milieu and had the opportunity of talking to and discussing with many friends and elders about my ambition : What should be the name of the newspaper ? What would be its readership ? Wherefrom would come the material to sustain it ? A friend was sceptic even about the availability of so many news stories for the newspaper every week. Might not the paper, he inquisitively queried, have to be printed with some blank pages ? Another sympathiser close to the Durbar circles warned that my attempt to bring out newspaper in the State might be regarded by powers that be, as an hostile act against the State and I be dubbed as a rebel. All this, however, could not stand in the way of my determination to have a newspaper in the State.

At last the time came when I bade good-bye to Lahore and settled down in Jammu. But I was penniless. My elder brother insisted that since I had spent one year in the Law college I should obtain a licence for legal practice, which one could get those days even without completing the law course. In deference to my brother's wishes I did submit an applicatin to the High court. It was rejected but it did satisfy my brother and me, too.

I was a jobless B.A. Securing permission for starting a newspaper seemed to be a Herculean task. Life in the town without a job was becoming impossible. I had also entered the marital life and did not want to be a financial burden on my brother any longer. In order, therefore, to meet

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my expenses I joined as an Accountant in the grade of Rs. 65-80 in the Private Estate, commonly known as Bhadarwah Jagir, of Maharaja (then Raja) Hari singh. During this service, after office hours, I spent most of my time in the public library and also continued my efforts in making conditions favourable for a newspaper in the State. I also began to be shadowed by the police.

Finally came the moment when on Chet 9 Samvat 1977 corresponding to March 22, 1921 , I preferred and application to His Higheness Maharaja Pratap singh for permission to start a newspaper and to set up a printing press for that purpose. Under the Press law in vogue in the State in those days, only the Ruler, and no other authority, could grant such permission.

The application in Urdu ran : "With deep respect it is submitted that I belong to Samba town, Jammu District. I am a youngman of twenty-six and a graduate from the Prince of Wales College. I have a natural liking for journalistic career and have devoted much of my time in the study of journalism and its uses. It is my long cherished desire to start a weekly from Jammu and to establish a printing press, too, to run that newspaper. It is requested that permission my kindly be granted under Rules 3 and 5 of the Press and Publications Regulations.

"It is mandatory under these Regulations to deposit a security for the printing press and the newspaper. But it is very humbly sought that since it is the first time that a newspaper will be started and a printing press set up in the State, Your Highness my in order to encourage the supplicant in this noble and national task, exempt these from security.

"The aims and object of the newspaper would be :

1. To promote feelings of loyalty and sympathy between the ruler and his people.
2. To publish the interesting, important and latest happenings in the State and the up-to-date main events of the world.
3. To promote feelings of unity and integrity amongst different sections and various classes of the people.
4. To channelise public opinion to beneficial purposes.
5. To place before the ruler the genuine grievances of the people for their proper redressal.
6. To discuss the educational, social, cultural, economic and other conditions in the State:

Having made this supplication, I started propaganda bringing home to the leading publicmen the necessity of a newspaper in the State. I persistently wrote in the national press and exhorted some friends also to do the same, underlining how an educated youngman of the State was determined to start a newspaper in the State for the first time.

Replying to my application, the Assistant Secretary to the Chief Minister, Jammu and Kashmir State, wrote to me under his office letter No. 42 dated April 14, 1921 : "With reference to his

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application dated Chet 9, Samvat 1977, Lala Mulk Raj Saraf is hereby informed that the Durbar does not consider it advisable to entertain his application for starting a weekly journal at Jammu."

On probing the matter I discovered that when my application was put up before Maharaja Pratap singh he was personally highly delighted and in his own hand remarked on the application; "Since the time of my forefathers there has been no newspaper in the State. My Chief Minister Dewan Sahib, who is also my trusted advisor, should advise me as to what to do or what not do in the matter."

Rai Bahadur Major-General Dewan Bishan Das was the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, and Rai Bahadur Lala Jagat Ram was his secretary. Both of them opined against permitting the publication of a newspaper. Pandit Brij Mohan Dattatrya Kaifi, the renowned Urdu poet, was the Assistant Secretary to the Chief Minister but his duty was limited to drafting the Durbar fiats.

I was astounded to receive this Durbar order, but it did not discourage me. I kept up my spirits and publically voiced protest against the order. I flayed it in the national press. This became the talk of the town. There was muffled talk even in the royal Durbar which used to be held every day but where only privileged people had approach. This was considered an important development. On Baisakh 20, Samvat 1978 (May 21, 1921), I preferred another application.

Asserting that "no reason has been given in rejecting my first application, therfore, I cannot make my submission on that score", I penned some additional grounds seeking the requisite permission. I submitted, again in Urdu : "It is well known to your Highness that thousands of newspapers are being published all over India and several of them come under your study, too. They give information about the conditions in the country. Likewise newspapers are also running in many Indian (Princely) States which discuss matters of public importance. The concerned Princes and the authorities keep themselves informed through these newspapers and accordingly run administration and make various orders.

This is also crystal clear that your Highness desires to see your people progressing and prosperous by removing their genuine grievances and putting a stop to any excesses. Achievement of this objective can be facilitated by a local newspaper. At present there is no channel for the people's grievances to reach Your Highness. This shortcoming can be remedied by starting a newspaper from the State capital so that genuine complaints continue receiving Your Highness's attention.

"Whereas Your Highness evinces keen interest in foreign affairs you have greater interest in your own people's conditions. Concocted news stories from the State are also daily carried in some irresponsible outside newspapers. A local newspaper would be an effective instrument in

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contradicting baseless propaganda. This will indeed be in the interest of both the ruler and the people of the State.

"The applicant is an educated State subject and fully understands his responsibilities. Applicant's purpose in starting a newspaper is to keep you well informed about the conditions in the State as well as to benefit Your Highness's people by creating interest in education and improving their social and economic environments."

In reply, I received the following letter from the Assistant Secretary to the Chief Minister under No. 3814 dated July 5, 1921 : "His Highness the Maharaja Sahib Bahadur has ordered that the starting of a newspaper in the State cannot be allowed."

I did remonstrate the second refusal but found marked variance in this order from the first one which had stated that the Durbar did not consider it advisable even to entertain my application. The reply to the second application at least signified that my application had fortunately been both entertained and considered, though the decision was still against me. This alteration in the official tone was significant and considering it a step forward I continued my efforts unabated. On the auspicious day of Baisakh 1, Samvat 1979, (April 13, 1922) I put in my application for the third time.

In this, I had repeated more or less the same submissions as made in my first two petitions. Only one important sentence was added : " If in the period of current reforms such a newspaper was started from this State, this could be greatly instrumental for the betterment of the people of the State."

The word "reforms: was introduced in this application because constitutional reforms were being inducted in the whole of British India and a period of reformation had also been initiated in the State. Maharaja Pratap Singh had been revested with full powers by the British Government. Dewan Bishan Dass had retired as the Chief Minister and the reins of the Government had passed into the hands of Raja Sir Hari Singh as Senior and Foreign Minister.

It was generally believed that Raja Sir Hari Singh favoured introduction of reforms in the State. However, my third application also met the same fate. Nevertheless the wording of the Government refusal this time was comparatively less discouraging. This reply from the Secretaryto the Senoir and Foreign Minister under No. 2010 dated 27-6-1922 read : "With reference to his application dated the 1st Baisakh 1979, regarding grant of permission to publish a weekly paper at Jammu, Lala Mulk Raj Saraf is hereby informed that His Highness the Maharaja Sahib Bahadur is not inclined to grant the required permission."

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Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

The reply to the first application had stated that it was not proper even to consider the application; the second application was considered but not allowed and the reply to the third application reflected grudging if not evasive attitude. Important changes were, however, taking place in the conditions in the State along with the varying national and international scenes which no Government could afford to ignore without endangering its own existence. The repeated refusals of the Government only steeled my will and that of my friends too. A sort of campaign was again launched in the national press protesting against the anti-press policy of the Durbar. The Dogra Sabha, then the solitary political organisation in the State, on being moved by me also stressed the need for starting a newspaper from the State.

I submitted my fourth application which proved to be the last on March 21, 1923, to the Senior and Foreign Minister, reiterating that publication of a newspaper from the State was indispensable and beneficial both for the Government and the people.

This application went to the Home Minister who pushed it on to the Commerce and Industries Minister, as the Printing Department was under him. Fortunately enough that portfolio was in the hands of an enlightened and liberal gentleman from Madras, Mr. Nagarkatti, while a popular bureaucrate Pandit Nand Lal Kaul was his Secretary. But, Mr. Wakefield, a Britisher, was functioning as the Chief Secretary to Raja Hari Sigh, the Senior and Foreign Minister. This gentleman had a great say in the Durbar: no matter could be put up in the Council of Ministers without first consulting him. When Mr. Nagarkatti brought my application to his notice that clever Briton privately queried from some people about my ideology and conduct. After completing necessary enquiries, Mr. Wake-field wrote in favour of putting up the matter in the Council.

However, before getting it into the Council agenda, Mr. Nagarkatti sent my application to the District Magistrate, Jammu, for his opinion about my character. This step was taken probably in view of my being *persona non grata* with the police who looked askance at me because of my activities to secure permission to start a newspaper in the State. Pandit Ram Chandra Dubey, the District Magistrate, in hiw wisdom forwarded my application to the Wazir Wazarat (Sub-divisional Magistrate) who sent it on to the Tehsildar who formally summoned me. On the due date I appeared in the Tehsil Office and presented certificates about my education, qualifiction and character. Having examined them the Tehsildar wrote note and forwarded it to the Wazir Wazarat who sent the dossier to the District Magistrate's office. The District Mgistrate submitted the note with his remarks to the Minister. After serutinising the papers, Mr. Nagarkatti drafted a resolution favouring permission and despatched it to the Council.

As I came to know later when the resolution was put up in the Council, Mr. B.J. Glancy I.C.S. Minister Incharge Police and Finance Departments (who later became the Governor of the pre-

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Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

1947 undivided Punjab) had first opposed it and then advised that if the editor of the proposed paper undertook the responsibility to regularly contradict all such news and despatches as appeared in outside Press against the State and the British authorities and also to continue to support the State Government, he might be granted the permission sought for. In other words the permission for the newspaper was to be only for publishing articles favouring the State Government. Mr Nagrakatti, however, pointed out the progress that the world had made and remarked that important events were taking place in the international area, in view of which permission for starting a newspaper from within the State was bound to benefit the Government as also its people. Yet while expressing his opinion in favour of granting the permission he, *inter alia,*noted on my application that it should be made clear to the applicant that "he would write in his paper only on such matters as would lead to the educational, economic and industrial advancement and that he would not use his pen to create class hatred and communal dissensions or arouse religious susceptibilities and that it was also expected of the applicant that he would refrain from writing on such matters of political nature as would adversely affect relations of Jammu and Kashmir State with the British Government or any other Indian State.

Luckily it was the heart-felt desire of Maharaja Pratap Singh to see a newspaper published in the State like those published in the Punjab. Raja Sir Hari singh, the Senior and Foreign Minister was also not opposed to it and Mr. Nagarkatti had already given his mind and supported it. Therefore, when this matter was finally discussed in the State Council on March 18, 1924, the Council unanimously accepted my application to which the Maharaja also subsequently affixed the Royal Seal.

Acting wisely, the State Council while granting permission to start a paper did not consider it proper to restrict me in any manner as was suggested by Messrs Glancy and Nagarkatti. The order that I got was in fact in the form of a letter that Mr. Nagarkatti had communicated to the Governor (District Magistrate) Jammu, and a copy of which he had sent to me under his own signatures. This letter No. 12488 dated March 28, 1924, read : "With reference to your letter No. A/1748 dated 31st January, 1924, I have the honour to inform you that His Highness the Maharaja Sahib Bahadur in Council has been pleased to accord permission under section 5 of the Jammu and Kashmir Press and Publications Regulations of 1971 *Bikrami* to request that you will kindly take the necessary action in the matter according to provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Press and Publications Regulation of 1971.

Along with seeking permission for the newspaper I had also applied for permissionfor setting up a printing press. The above letter, however, did not mention anything about the printing press. I, therefore, addressed a letter to the Commerce and Industries Minister on April 1, 1924,

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Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

requesting that I should be assured that the permission for starting the newspaper included the permission for starting a printing press as well. The very next day, that is on April 2, 1924, I received the order No. 12652 stating : "With reference to your application of yesterday's date, I have the honour to inform you that the permission already conveyed to you implies permission for starting a press also." Thereafter, the State Council at its meeting in Srinagar on June 5, 1924, confirmed this reply of the Commerce and Industries Minister.

The Governor (District Magistrate) of Jammu in the light of the State Council Resolution of March 18, 1924 sent a memo to me on April 25, 1924, directing : "Lala Mulk Raj Saraf may be asked to fulfil the conditions as laid down in section 3 and 13 of the Press and Publications Regulation. He may furnish a cash security of Rs. 500.00". In compliance with this order I deposited Rs. 500.00 as the security on the following day *viz.* April 25, 1924. I had already submitted the declarations for the press and newspaper as soon as I had received the Governor's order. The Governor replied to me on May 5, 1924 under No. 726 : "With reference to his letter No. Nil dated the 26th April, 1924, to the address of the District Magistrate, Lala Mulk Raj Saraf is hereby informed that the declarations submitted by him for starting a press and a paper in vernacular have duly been accepted and the F.D. Receipt No. 856/7669 dated the 26th April, 1924, for Rs. 500.00 deposited by him in the Pubjab National Bank as pledged security has been kept with the Nazir of this office for safe custody."

Thus, after all, having passed through various stages spread over a period for more than three years, I was fortunate enough to get the permission to start the first newspaper from the Jammu and Kashmir State.

After the Council permission, one day Mr. Nagarkatti called me to his office and made some queries from me about the policy of the newspaper. Having got appropriate replies he expressed his satisfaction. I vividly recollect his words : "This permission is a test whether a State subject could discharge such a public responsibility especially in these trying times." I remembered the God Almightly and prayed to Him to enable me to come out successfully in the test.

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THE RANBIR TAKES SHAPE

In the beginning I had intended to name the paper "Pahari" and the press "Dogra Press". But after further consideration I thought it proper to name the newspaper "Ranbir" and the press "Public Printing Press". No doubt, the newspaper title coincided with the name of the late Maharaja Ranbir singh, son of Maharaja Gulab singh who was the founder of the Jammu and Kashmir State, and father of the kind hearted and generous Maharaja Pratap Singh. He was considered a wide awake and learned rural. But in reality "Ranbir" was "Ranvir" literally meaning 'knight of the battle field'.

The feeling, however, soon began to dawn upon me that getting permission for starting a newspaper was perhaps not so hard a job as actually publishing the paper and putting it on a sound footing. Numerous friends conveyed their felicitations to me as they felt overjoyed on my success in obtaining the permission for a newspaper. It was as if they had come upon something long due to them. They pressed hard that the Ranbir should be started soonest possible ; just as I had been pressing the Government for granting the premission. But I had literally to start from a mere scratch.

With a view to carrying out the new task I naturally gave up the Government service. Arranging funds seemed an intractable proposition. My ambitions were high but resources very little. I had spent quite a few years in struggling hard to obtain the permission for starting the newspaper. The people also appeared restive to see the first newspaper of their State but good intentions alone would not, as indeed these could not, provide me the wherewithal to proceed further with the venture.

Some newspapers in the Pubjab began to take serious exception to the delay in publishing the paper after getting the much-sought-for permission. At first I thought of floating a limited company but its success looked doubtful, as the moneyed persons were only interested in their lucre. On the other hand my sole motive in starting the newspaper was to serve the State according to my own ideas.

After a good deal of thought, I found a like-minded friend Mr. Vishva Nath Wadehra, who accepted my offer of managing the newspaper. When the question of expenses came, I at once put before him all the ornaments of my wife. He was deeply moved. Instead of utilising that jewellery, Mr. Wadehra, immediately, ran to common friend Wazir Tej Ram and

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borrowed Rs. 2,000.00 from him. The pronote was jointly signed by both of us. Thus I got a valuable colleageue as well as the necessary finance.

Then began a search for the office and the printing press. We got a small cutcha quarter near the Rani Talab belonging to Thakur Kartar singh who later rose to be the State's Finance Minister. We set up a hand litho printing machine for which we obtained the services of a machine-man from Sialkot. A few more technicians had to be recruited. Those available were mostly the permanent employees of the local Government Press, then called the Ranbir Prakash Press but now named as the Ranbir government Press. They were ultimately prevailed upon to work after the office hours. There were also no Katibs (caligraphists) at that time. Again we had to depend upon the official machinery. Munshi Taj Din was a renowned Katib employed in the Government Press. He and one of his juniors undertook to do the job for the Ranbir. Taj Din would not, however, come to our office. We had to take the necessary material to him at his house. We gladly withstood thus humouring him. With great difficulty we later on secured services of two whole-time Katibs.

The appointment of the editorial and managerial staff offered no handicaps. Mr. Wadehra was the manager and I the editor. There was no question of appointing any assistant in the very beginning. In clerical job, both of us were trained and we did the work of even folding the paper ourselves as an austerity measure.

Notwithstanding all this, we did need a person for going out, cleansing offices, distributing the paper, etc. Luckly we got the services of a thoroughly honest, loyal and untiring man in the person of Pandit Jagat Ram. His loyalty was so abiding that when after his having served in the Ranbir office for twenty-six years, the newspaper was wound up, he did not leave me till he breathed his last at over eighty. He continued to serve me with the same dedication that had been his hallmark throughout. He worked as peon in the office, he made purchases from the market he distributed the newspaper to the local subscribers and also collected subscription. Whenever he got some leisure he did not shirk any domestic job and even supervised the childeren. He was intolerant of shoddly work or any loss. All the big and the small in the office and the household held him in great reverence like an esteemed elder of the family.

Having established the office but before setting up our printing press, a life-size Urdu poster was issued in the name of the Manager, Mr. Wadehra. since there was no private press in Jammu, this poster was got printed on payment from the government Press. The poster carried a long caption :- "True interpreters of the national sentiments, the weekly Ranbir, will soon come out from the *Rajdhani* Jammu with solemn dignity." It said "Respectable Citizens,

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thousand thanks to the God Almightly that our long cherished hope has been realised. His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur and the Members of the State Council with much kindness have fulfilled a long desired object of the people of the State and keeping in view their future welfare permitted the publication of a national Weekly from the State. The first editor, printer and publisher of the Ranbir will be a qualified youngman, Mr. Mulk Raj Saraf, B.A. What the paper would be like will be evident from the paper itself. However, for the information of the public it would be proper to say that the policy of the Ranbir will be similar to that of a national newspaper. It will not hold brief for any particular religion or sect but it will be the common mouth-piece of the people of the State irrespective of religion, caste or creed.

"The Ranbir will provide fresh and trustworthy news from all parts of the State, will place the requirements of the people before the country and the ruler and *inter alia* discuss the social, cultural, educational, commercial, agricultural, and other economic affairs pertaining to the State. Weighty writings of well known scribes and correspondents from inside and outside the State will adorn its pages and compositions of competent poets appearing in it will entertain the reader. Arrangements will be made to have latest and useful news from all foreign countries in general and from India and Indian States in particular. In short no pains will be spared to make the newspaper inviting.

"We are fully confident that the first national newspaper of the State will reach every literate person in the State and that the public will encourage the management by paying advance subscription or accepting to have the first newspaper sent to them by V.P.P. The newspaper will also have its own printing Press. The subscription rates of the newspaper will be rupees four per annum and rupees two and annas eight for six months. Every issue will be priced at an anna and a half.

"The Ranbir will be *sui generis* in the advancement of business of the advertisers. The advertisment rates will ba an anna and a half per line for the first line and an anna per line subsequently. Those wishing to advertise should immediately despatch their material. Other details could be settled orally or through correspondence. All business correspondence should be with the manager and all contributions for publication should be sent to the editor."

As soon as the poster was published the public began to manifest practical proof of their deep interest in the project. The itch among the people to read their own first newspaper was so intense that they vied with one another by sending in the subscription.

Some of the prominent people who honoured us by remitting their subscriptions before the actual appearance of the paper included Pandit Jia Lal Kaul Kilam Vakil, Sardar Khem Chand, Officer in-chanrge Tosha Khanna, and his son Dr. Barkat Ram, Mirza Ghulam Mustafa,

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Aga Syed Hussain, Pandit Shri Kanth Thusso, Lala Sukhram Dass Shah, Lala Durga Dass Gandotra, Pandit Ganga Ram, Sub Judge, Pandit Govind Ram Sub-divisional Magistrate, Lala Lal Chand Gupta, Shri Salig Ram Kaul Vakil, Pandit Sriniwas Shah, Thakur Haqiqat Singh Jamwal, Maulvi Mohd. Abdullah Vakil, Pandit Chander Joo Vakil, Pandit Govind Joo, Sardar Kanayhia Singh, Lala Bodh Raj, Pandit Lok Nath Sharma Vakil, Lala Dina Nath Gandotra, Home Secetary, Pandit Lakhmi Chand Magotra, Shri Ram Nath Kapoor, Manager Dewans' Estate, Thakur Sardool Singh, Doctor Rafi-ud-Din, Lala Kashmiri Lal Gaind, Lala Badri Nath Mirpuri, Wazir Asu Ram, Pandit Banke Behari, Pandit Bholoo Ram, Lala Beli Ram, Jyuotshi Anant Ram, Lala Boota Mal Transporter, Sardar Sunder Singh Rais, Shri Ganesh Das Headmaster, Chaudhri Mangtu Shah, Shri Mehboob Alam Inspector Police, Lala Shiv Nath Vakil, Lala Nathu Ram Vakil, Mahasha Ram Chand Gupta and Thakur Dhanantar Singh Slathia Forest Range Officer who sent ten rupees instead of four as yearly subscription and continued doing that for many years.

Maharaja Pratap Singh donated rupees one hundred annually while Sir Raja Hari singh rupees fifty annually for "this pioneer enterprise" as was remarked in the official letter to me.

This sampling of the original subscribers of the Ranbir would show how the people of the State, particularly the youngmen, in all walks of life and in all parts of the State, were enthused with the emergence of the first newspaper in their midst. Many of them later played significant part in making the State tread onward and indeed rose to eminent positions in their respective spheres. This reflected the presence, though in a latent form, of sufficient social urge and awakening among the people who needed some forum to project their views and the Ranbir did indeed amply provide it. Their continued association with the Ranbir was, no doubt, a source of mutual inspiration and guidance.

In addition to the towns, numerous messages were pouring in from the far off places enquiring impatiently when the Ranbir would be out . We, on our part, were planning durable arrangement so that once started the newspaper shall continue to function.

Those days it was not so difficult to obtain the postal registration number as it is now. Such registration reduces considerably the postage expenses. I arranged the registration at Lahore for the very first issue of the Ranbir. It is an interesting story as to how this happened. We were anxious to cut down the expenses to the minimum. I hit upon the proposal to issue a dummy edition of the Ranbir,. This sample edition was published on May 20, 1924, corresponding to Jaisath 8, Samvat 1981. It front-paged a poem capitoned "Oh restive heart of the nation hold on steadfastly." It was a beautiful composition by a kind friend and renowned poet of the Pujab, Pandit Har Kishan Lal Habib Wazirabadi. The front page also

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contained an article by Shri Chuni Lal Anand forcefully pointing out that the Shri Mahalakshmi Temple, Pacca Danga, in the heart of the Jammu City, was the headquarter of 'Churrus wallas' who worshipped the churrus day and night.

The leading article in the sample issue was titled "Righteousness." Besides other things the article highlighted the significance of the word 'Ranbir.' Its lexical meaning was "Knight of the battlefield"; 'Rana' meant the battlefield and 'Vir' signified the puissant vanquisher by nature. The word 'Napoleon' in French means the same thing as the "Ranbir" in Sanskrit.

There was another poem inside captioned, "The Ranbir is not a mere scrap of paper" a composition by Sayed Zulfiqar Ali Nasim Razvi asserting that the 'Ranbir' would heartily support the common cause of the Hindus and the Muslims and whatever it would say, would not be word-fencing or prolix. The dummy edition carried another important item. It was the Urdu rendering of the four year old historical address by the Governor General of India, Lord Chelmsford, which he had delivered in Jammu in 1921, on the occasion of the restoration of full powers to Maharaja Pratap singh.

I took this edition to Lahore and approached the office of the Post-Master General where after due scrutiny I was at once given the registered number L-1677 for the Ranbir.

Now came the important stage of having reporters and correspondents for the Ranbir. It required deep consideration as to how to arrange for collection and despatch of the news from important places in the State. Those days there were very few people in the State who had any experience in reporting. A reporter is concerned with facts and nothing but facts. He may like or dislike a fact, he may agree or disagreee with any step by a public leader or a Government spokesman but as a press correspondent he is duty-bound to project the factual picture without exaggeration and distortion leaving it to his readers to draw their own conclusions. The five-word Bible of journalists namely "facts are sacred, comments free" was then little known in the State.

Fortunately, however, we had not to face much difficulty in this respect in view of our own limited requirements. From the very start we could get the services of some sincere youngmen with little experience but deep sense of public service. And the wonder of wonders was that they did not expect nor were paid any remuneration. Believe it or not those correspondents of the Ranbir used to pay for reading their own stories as they regularly paid the subscription of the paper.

The foremost correspondent of the Ranbir was Maulvi Mohd. Zain-ul-Abdin Kohi Samahanvi. He used to send news and other stories concerning Mirpur district including Bhimber and Kotli (now under Pakistan occupation) as well as Nowshera and Rajouri. He used to write

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Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

under different pen-names, sometimes his full name, sometimes only 'Samahanvi', at other times 'Majzub Kisan' and occasionally under 'Mirpur District Correspondent.' In his first letter to the editor published in the Ranbir he asked the Ruler "If Your Highness is keenly intersted to know about the miserable conditions under which the people of the State live, then please do not enquire from the *Zaildars* who like quakes are themselves mostly responsible for the ills of the rural population. These *Zaildars* are at best the spokesmen of the Government but they cannot rightly represent the down-trodden people. If Your Highness wants to be acquainted with the true state of affairs concerning the hut-dweller and the half-naked farmer, then kindly ask such a man in person as to how he finds the world or read what appears in the columns of the Ranbir."

With the passage of time the Ranbir was able to secure the services of some competent and reliable correspondents. Here are some prominent names among them :

Srinagar	:	Pandit Salig Ram Kaul Vakil, Pandit Jia Lak Kaul Kilam Advocate, Maulvi Mohd. Abdullah Vakil, Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, Pandit Kayshup Bandhu, Pandit Prem Nath Sadhu Pradesi, Pandit Bladev Parshad Sharma, Shri Thakur Singh Das and Mr. K.N. Aima.
Sopore	:	Munshi Ghulam Rasul Khadim.
Baramulla	:	Sardar Kanayhia Singh.
Muzaffarabad	:	Lala Ram Lal Shah and Lala Bodh Raj.
Bhaderwah	:	Kotwal Ram Lal.
Kishtwar	:	Mehta Nand Lal, Shri Ishrat Kashmiri and Shri Nishat Kishtwari.
Udhampur	:	Lala Prahlad Bhagat Vakil.
Mirpur	:	Choudhari Gian Chand Sadabarti.
Ranbirsinghpura	:	Lala Rohlu Ram.
Bhimber	:	Shri Chaman Lal Wadehra and Chowdhary Mohd. Shafi.
Marawar	:	Raizada Hans Raj Bali.
Samba	:	Mahasha Ram Chand Gupta.
Kathua	:	Lala Nathu Ram Vakil.
Kotli	:	Bhagat Rup chand Vakil and Munshi Chanan Din.
Rajouri	:	Master Abdul Aziz Ilayi, Mirza Faquir Mohd. and Chaudhari Mohan Lal Motial.
Ramnagar	:	Master Hem Raj Jandial.
Poonch	:	Khwaja Ghulam Qadir Bandey and Shri Daya Nand Kapoor.
Chenani	:	Lala Dina Nath Gupta.

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The renowned poet of Kashmir, Mahjur, also occasionally used to send news to the Ranbir. Shri Jiwan Lal, a Police Court Inspector author of 'How to prevent traffic in Women' used to write anonymously for the Ranbir. Similarly Pandit Ganga Nath Sharma who was on the personal staff of Maharaja Pratap Singh used to send important Durbar news and other stories.

So far as Jammu city, the seat of the Ranbir, was concerned, a number of correspondents, poets and other contributors freely wrote for the Ranbir. They included Sarvashri Vishwa Nath Kerni, Zulfiqar Ali Nasim, Habib Ullah, Shri Ram, Badri Nath Vakil, Girdhari Lal Anand, S.S. Nishat, Sarwan Nath Aftab, Prem Nath Sadhu Raunaq, Arjan Singh Arsh, Bansi Lal Suri, Kishan Samailpuri, Qais Sherwani, Manohar Lal Suri, Qais Sherwani, Manohar Lal Dil, Mathra Dass Shaiq, Mirza Mubarak Beg, Ram Kishen Ghafil, Master Zinda Kaul, Narsingh Sahai Chohan, Amar Nath Shahid, Sewak Ram Basir, Ghulam Haider Chishti, Mohd. Akbar Akhgar Askin, Sahibzada Mohd. Umar, Mohiuddin Ahmad Qumar and Gosain Tara Chand. Besides, Lala Hans Raj Vakil, Sardar Budh singh, Pandit Anant Ram Dogra, Pandit Lok Nath Sharma, Sardar Mohinder Singh, Lala Ram Saran Das Malhotra, Pandit Pindi Dass Goswami, Thakur Kahan singh Billawiria, Dr. Hari Chand Hari, Pandit Nand Lal Talib, Sardar Daleep singh land-lord and Raizada Lakhmi Chand contributed occasionally to the columns of the Ranbir. An eminent Urdu poet and writer Pandit Vitasta Prasad Fida of Lahore was one of the regular contributors from outside the State. Kaviraj Guru Dutt Vaid Sharma used to write from Karachi.

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A RED LETTER DAY

June 24, 1924, corresponding to Har 11, Samvat 1981, will indeed be remembered as a red letter day in the history of Jammu and Kashmir. It was then that the first regular issue of the Ranbir made its appearance. It was to be published every week in Urdu, the official language of the State. By happy coincidence, on that auspicious day my wife who had gone to see her parents in Lyallpur (now in West Pakistan) gave birth to my second son, Suraj.

Besides of course the editiorial and other items usually associated with a weekly newspaper, the inaugural 12-page issue carried articles and compositions by Lala Hans Raj Vakil, Sardar Budh Singh, Pandit Har Kishan Lal Habib, Syed Zu-ul-Fikar Ali Nasim Razvi, Maulvi Mohd Zain-ul-Abdin Kohi Samahanavi, Pandit Ram Saran Das Shandalia, Editor the Rajasthan and Dr. Barkat Ram (then in London). Author of another feature was 'A lazy Nationalist'. His real name was Lala Bal Makund Varma. Being in the Government service as an Assistant Accountant General his real name was not published. He was a great intellectual and a patriot. It may not be out of the place to reproduce here some of his sentiments :

"To-day is undoubtedly a red letter day in the history of Jammu and Kashmir. This is the 'Id' day which dawns after penance in the shape of fasting during the month of Ramzan, for the eleven months of mundane sins and other distracting activities. It signifies focus on the politics, culture and welfare of the State and lighting up the narrow crannies of moral and social degradations. All felicitations to the youngman Lal Mulak Raj Saraf who has succeeded today in setting his foot after years of strenuous efforts and relentless struggle on the path which though full of pathos will take him to goal of his ideals. Congratulations also to the Dogra community who is putting this heavy burden of its own welfare in various respects on the shoulders of this upcoming youngman. It is a day of congratulations also for His Highness in whose reign this sapling is being planted which has the potentiality of growing into a strong shady tree capable of bearing fruits. But in order to nourish this plant, all shall have to devote their best energies and water it with their sweat and blood. That end has got to be achieved not for securing franchise on communal basis nor for loot and plunder, nor for usurping one another's human, social or political rights but for guaranteeing comforts to all the inhabitants of the State, for ensuring their progress and prosperity and for the full development of all their mental and physical capacities."

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Lala Hans Raj Vakil who was the founder of the first national organisation of the State *viz.* Dogra Sabha, as well as several other public institutions, felt ecstatic at the very idea of the publication of the first newspaper of the State. He wrote : "O, the desires of the man disheartened so far, are going to be realised : I am joyed beyond all limits to know that the Ranbir is about to come out."

The first issue also contained three pages of advertisements It would be of interest to recall the names of some of the advertisers of those days such as Bagai Motor Works, Jammu; Harision and Co. Calcutta, Mangal Singh and Bros., Harmonium Makers, Jammu; Har Bhagwan Pansari, Rawalpindi; The Kashmir Kishore Pharmacy, Jammu ; Karkhana Khizabe-Alam-Gir, Lyallpur ; Secretary Indian Mutual Family Relief Fund S.C.S. Amritsar and Lala Prameshri Das Khosla M.A., Chief Agent, Jammu and Kashmir, the Lakshmi Insurance Co Ltd., Lahore. The idea to earn any profit from subscriptions or advertisements was far from my heart at that time. The receipts were meant only to meet the normal expenses. As the income of the newspaper began to augment, its staff also increased. The Ranbir had on its staff Hindus and Muslims both Dogras and Kashmiris as also people from the Punjab.

The quion of the first issue of the Ranbir was of course its editorial underscoring the aims and objectives of the paper. Some excerpts of the editorial captioned 'Our Policy and Objectives' translated from Urdu are worth mentioning here :

"A new era is dawning upon the world and every nation and country is striving for progress. In some countries kingship holds sway while at other places freedom struggle is being relentlessly pursued. In certain countries imperialism is reigning supreme while elsewhere heads are bowing before democracy. If in some places commerce is thriving, in the other places capitalists and labourers are at loggerheads. Some places are even now steeped in darkness while others are seeing the struggle for social emancipation. If unity is the watchword somewhere, the idea of separate franchise is confronting in other areas. In some spots religious fanaticism was raising its head and in other parts proselytism was trumpeting. In short, every place is in ferment. Everywhere political, economic and social forces are pushing ahead and pulsating with new life. It is impossible that Jammu and Kashmir, somnolent for a long time, should remain unaffected by every day international happenings and the people in the State are not infused with the vigorous idea of marching forward. It is the symbol of awakening.

"However, mere wishes could not lead to progress or bring one successfully out of struggle. Success demands sacrifice, perseverance, love, intrepidity and a course of action based on righteousness.

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"That is the pious objective that brings the Ranbir into the battle-field. Though it seems that the Ranbir is surrounded on all sides by thorny hedges, yet its own path is quite clear and straight : its motive force is duty, truth and dare. It is actuated by sentiments of service and love and it is far away from bias, hatred and underhand means; hence, fully convinced of its success.

"We will prefer ancient Indian system of Government through *Panchayats* to anyother. The real inhabitants of the State should get their natural rights and they should have precedence in all spheres. But along with them the rights of those who have settled here for long or who have given up their homelands for settlement here or who during their settlement here had done their best in the service to the people of the State, should also be specially cared for.

"No country can forge ahead without complete unity and solidarity among its people. Advantages of unity are myriad. It is, therefore, imperative that rights of every citizen, without caring for whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim or whether he is a Kashmiri or a Dogra, should be fully and equally respected and guarded. This will eliminate any chance of mutual suspicion. However, we do not support any view-point which reflects separatism and which is despised by civilised world. In our view all people, whether Hindus or Muslims or whether they are Dogras, Kashmiris, Baltis or Ladakhis, are of equal status and whosoever among them is capable or acquiting himself well in any position has alone the right to occupy that position.

"We stand for free primary education throughout the State. Religious education may also be provided. Arrangements should be made for adequate industrial training to exploit the vast natural resources of the State.

"The Ranbir will particularly highlight the problem of social welfare. In this behalf people shall have to root out wisely and resolutely all those evils that are increasingly undermining the society and bringing us discredit and infamy in the world. Besides, we shall have to vigorously remedy the causes responsible for the social and moral deterioration of the people, in particular of those living in the hilly areas.

"Following matters will be specially advocated by the Ranbir :

1. Abolition of system of *begar* (forced labour) which is reminiscent of the barbaric ages;
2. Eradication of corruption which is ravaging numerous poor and noble families;
3. Obliteration of perpetration of terrorism on the people of the State, particularly in the hills;
4. Removal of the rural indebtedness;
5. Financial, commercial, agricultural and industrial progress of the people;

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6. Development of means of communications;
7. Adoption of adequate measures for the health of the people."

The concluding lines of this leading article said : In the progress of the people of the State lies the secret of the progress of the rest of India because this State is the head and the rest of India, the body. Therefore, where as the Ranbir will be the well wisher of the people of the State, it would also be equally helpful and friendly to the rest of India and would spare nothing in serving her. O God, do bless us and give us the power to succeed in these tests and to perform your Commands."

The people received the first issue of the Ranbir with robust enthusiasm. The educated people gave it a place in their hearts. The villagers enjoyed reading it in groups. I received congratulatory messages even from London, Paris, New York, Hong Kong, Kabul and Baghdad where several youths of the State as also other friends happened to be at that moment.

Renowned story-writer Munshi Prem Chand expressed his great pleasure on the birth of the Ranbir 'from a far off place like Jammu'. The well-known revolutionary Lala Har Dayal sent his message from Sweden describing the birth of the Ranbir as a significant event in the history of the Indian States. Newspapers in various parts of India approvingly reviewed the Ranbir in their columns. Munshi Mohammed Din Fauq Editor, the Kashmir Magazine, Lahore, wrote : "From a country lacking sense of appreciation for literature, to dive out such a valuable pearl was within the competence of *Saraf* (Jeweller) alone.

Prominent among the poets who versified their ideas on the inauguration of the Ranbir included Shri Kishan Samailpuri, Lala Badri Nath Vakil who later became the Law Secretary to the State Government, Syed Zul-fiqar Ali Nasim who later became a *tehsildar* and is now holding a prominent position in West Pakistan, Pandit Prem Nath Pardesi, Pandit Har Kishan Lal Habib, Mirza Mubarik Beg Mubarik and Shri Ram Krishan Ghafil.

Among the numerous messages of greetings there was one which still cherish the most. It was from one of my esteemed teachers Shri Rattan Lal Mohan. He was the first graduate teacher at whose feet I had had the privilege to sit and learn much during my school days. He was passionately devoted to literature and journalism which later impelled him to resign from the education department and settle in Lahore. There, Shri Mohan came in contact with several prominent newspapers and other periodicals. His highly literary and informative articles appeared in various leading newspapers under the pen name of 'An unknow Journalist'. During the First World War, he also served as an interpreter in the Middle East.

When Shri Mohan learnt that an old pupil of his had laid the foundations of Journalism in Jammu and Kashmir, he sent me a lengthy letter giving valuable tips which, even though

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over forty years have since gone by, can still prove guide-posts for the journalists of today. The letter which is dated Lahore, July 1, 1924, exactly a week after the appearance of the Ranbir, said: I hasten to congratulate you on the bringing out of the Ranbir. The sturdy infant shall one day rise to the full proportions of a highly developed institution and you cannot be too careful to bestow your undivided attention to its growth. Let your tone be serious rather than idealistic, practical rather then commonplace and sysmpathetic rather than hyper-critical. But guard yourself against being too grave, pontifical and patriarchal. Infuse humour into your notes, make them light but not flippant. Be always on the side of law, order and constitutionalism. Let your style be vigorous, not flambuoyant ; simple, not jejune; direct, not blunt ; let it strike a happy medium between the plain and the ornate. Do not use such words as Sansani Khejh which is nonsense. Study regularly some high class Urdu journal as the Zamindar or some other magazines. Make a discriminating use of new terms of speech. Do not let the passion get the better of your reason. You cannot cleanse the world of its evil by a stroke of the pen, however vigorous it may be. Remember to climb down from the cloud-land of ideals to hard facts. Never permit your criticism to be bitter or one-sided. Needless to add that you know the intention of the Defamation Act. Do not publish unauthorised communications. But I need not play the part of a preacher to you. Your qualifications, public spirit and the stern integrity of your motives shall make you equal to the exigencies of journalistic life. I wish you the best of luck, Cheerio."

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ENCOUNTERS WITH THE WRONG-DOERS

True to its profession the Ranbir had, since its very inception, to wage a relentless struggle against all those elements who stood in the way of a healthy development of the community life. Indeed no public service is possible with a sense of fear and favour. A conscientious worker in any walk of life, at times, is bound to suffer the wrath of the authority ; at other times, the anger of the ignorant public ; and still on occasions the obstinacy of the both together. Naturally, the Ranbir could not be an exception. It always had its share of bouquets as well as brickbats, What, however, appeared to me to be more than compensating was the sort of spiritual bliss that I invariably felt over each encounter with the wrong-doers. Some of the such interesting experiences in the early life of the Ranbir may be mentioned here.

It was the time of Maharaja Pratap Singh. The cooks of the Royal Household used to bring their *hookas* with them during working hours. After finishing the job dishonest cooks would empty the basin of their *hookas* and refill them with the *Ghee* and then leave the precincts of the royal kitchen. The Ranbir criticised the conduct of such cooks, of course, in light vein. When in obedience to the royal command, I presented myself in the Durbar, His Highness graciously asked me to take my seat near him and then in a low yet sublime voice told me that he was never unaware of what was happening in his kitchen but since I had given it publicity and voiced public feelings in the matter, he ordered his personal secretary to honour me with an award of Rs. 200.00 (equivalent to the cost of a robe of honour) as token of his appreciation. At first, I hesitated to accept the money but on being affectionately reprimanded by some kind friends present there, that my refusal to accept the royal pleasure would tantamount to an act of discourtesy to the person of the august Ruler, I agreed, put the cash into my pocket, bowed before His Highness and returned home.

Mr. B.J. Glancy, the Finance and Police Minister, generally used to go to Lahore on week-ends. Once a deputation headed by Sheikh Sadiq Hussain, a leading member of the Central Legislative Assembly, waited upon him in Lahore and placed before him grievances and demands of Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir. A comprehensive account of this meeting appeared in the civil and military Gazette Lahore of June 6, 1925. The reply given by Mr. Glancy to the deputationists as published in the Lahore Daily indicated that the whole affair concerning the deputation was probably stage-managed at the instance of Mr. Glancy himself.

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While answering the questions put by the Lahore deputation on behalf of the Muslim population of the State, Mr. Glancy posed himself not merely as the champion of their cause but also as the virtual Ruler of the State. Some of his replies besides being seemingly inspired were most overweening. I could hardly believe that an experienced administrator that undoubtedly Mr. Glancy was, could allow himself to conduct like that. I waited for over a week to see if any contradiction of the reported statement would be forthcoming but it was in vain. I, then, took up the cudgels, challenged the statement of Mr. Glancy which besides being derogatory to the Maharaja, was capable of inciting communal passions. I vehemently attacked him for expressing partisan views to the detriment of the interests of the people of the State as a whole. The day (Har 32, 1982) my comments appeared in the Ranbir, Major (Now Lieutenant Colonel) Baldev Singh Samyal, Who was the A.D.C. to Raja Hari Singh, Senior and Political Member of the State Council and also holding the rank of the Commander-in-Chief of the State Forces, came to me to convey Raja Sahib's appreciation of my article criticising Mr. Glancy. Soon after, the same day, Major-General Thakur Janak Singh, Revenue Minister, paid a visit to my office and patted on my back. All sections of the public opinion spoke highly of these comments, Muslims not excluding.

As a matter of fact the Ranbir from its very start held the view that there was no such thing as Muslim grievances or Hindu grievances. No body would deny the existence of grievances then as even now but such grievances are more or less common to all and hence are people's grievances which could be got remedied only by common efforts of the responsible people. Such attitude of the Ranbir, however, also aroused jealousy of some 'friends' and they approached Mr. Glancy who was infuriated over the comments in the Ranbir. He rushed to the State Council with a strongly-worded note stressing urgency to launch proceedings on behalf of the State against the Editor of the Ranbir "for the affront indulged in by him in his paper against a Minister of the State Government." The pity of its was that the State council gave its consent to carry out the behest of its all powerful British Minister. What actually took place inside the Council Chamber, I never bothered to enquire about. It was anybody's guess. The Council order, however, then to be effective, required the Ruler's assent. When the case was put up before Maharaja Pratap singh, he mutely, as was his wont, asked the State Secretary to read out to him the Editor's reply to the charges against him. The Secretary searched through the file more than once but could find no trace there of any query from the Editor much less a reply thereto. Thereupon His Highness observed that it did not behove the royalty to sign an order of prosecution against a person without first giving him an opportunity to reply. He was not at all, he added, in favour of condemning unheard. So,

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the file was sent back to the Council with the instructions from his Highness to first attach explanation of the Editor with the papers and then seek his assent.

The Council Secretariat forwarded the file to the District Magistrate, Jammu. I was summoned by the District Magistrate (Pandit Ram Chandra Dubey). When I appeared before his court, he gently enquired of me as to why I dared offend Mr. Glancy. I simply replied that it was my bounden duty to criticise his public conduct. The District Magistrate asked me to file my explanation.

In the statement which I submitted to the District Magistrate on August 14, 1925, I explained the circumstances justifying my comments in a bit stronger tone than that used in my original note published in the Ranbir. The last para of my statement read : "The Ranbir as organ of the best thoughts in the State, owed it to the public to give expression to the views which every well-wisher of the State held in the matter. The comment in the Ranbir, you will kindly see, was *bona fide* and made purely in the interests of the ruler and the people of the State." The District Magistrate felt amazed, if not embarrassed, and remarked "you are inviting more trouble." I submitted that my cause was just and that I was prepared to suffer the consequences. We both then had an informal meeting and after that I left the Court. After some days I came to know that the State Council has dropped the case against me. Later on, it transpired that the District Magistrate while returning my case to the Council had also somewhere in his note 'hinted' that the Editor had been told (of course, without my knowing anything about it) to be more careful in future in such matters. The District Magistrarte had in his wisdom adopted this course obviously to save face of the Council. The whole episode enhanced the reputation of the Ranbir and it became a talk of the town.

I had another interesting encounter with another powerful Englishman, Mr. G.E.C. Wakefield, then Chief Secretary to Maharaja Hari Singh. One day I was discussing with him in his office chambers some important matters concerning the welfare of the people of the State and in that context I asked him to request the Maharaja to take certain immediate steps in the public interest. As if to strike a bargain, Mr. Wakefield asked me in return to wirte an article on a particular subject and in this connection went so far as to even dictate the lines on which the article should be written. This appeared to me to be against all canons of independent journalism. I felt he was perhaps still thinking of himself as my boss (I had served as an accountant cum clerk in the Private Domains of Raja Hari Singh under Mr. Wakefield).

In a rather excited tone I told Mr. Wakefiedl that I had not come there to be advised by him as to what I should write or should not write in my paper : that should be left to the Editor's discretion. The shrewd Englishman noticing my chagrin at once replied that he

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never meant to dictate to me : he was simply making a suggestion which I might take up or reject ; that was entirely my (Editor's) concern, he agreed. This soothened me. Indeed, I felt within myself that I ought not to have addressed him in the way I did. Perhaps the Editor in me, on the spur of the moment, got the better of me, Mr. Wakefield who later became the Foreign and Political Minister, did not, however, let the episode pass easily. Hardly two years after the event, when I went to him to know as to why the publication of the Ranbir had been banned, his terse reply was 'you were riding on elephant.'

There was one notorious *tehsildar* Raizada Ralia Ram. A case of wrongful confinement and extortion of money had been filed against him by one Sham Das Shah, resident of Doda, in the Sessions Court at Jammu . A departmental enquiry against the conduct of the *tehsildar* in the matter had already been held by Sheikh Abdul Qayum, Sub-Division Magistrate, Udhampur, under orders of the Revenue Minister, Major General Thakur Janak Singh. The Ranbir published the report verbatim as submitted by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate to the Revenue Minister. Almost the whole official world was up at arms against what they, in their wisdom, described as 'insolant and overbearing conduct' of the Editor of the Ranbir. On the complaint lodged by the *tehsildar*, the Revenue Minister sent for me to know the source of my information. As honour-bound I point-blank refused to divulge the source. Thereupon, the Revenue Minister threatened me with prosecution. My simple reply was 'come what may'. Ultimately the *tehsildar* filed a petition before the Sessions Judge complaining that by the publication in the Ranbir of the report of Sub-Divisional Magistrate the Editor had tried to prejudice the criminal proceedings pending against him in his court. The Sessions Judge, Dewan Bodh Raj Sawhney, was too shrewd to be easily taken in. He consigned the complaint to the office record.

Likewise a petition-writer filed a suit of defamation against me in the Court of City Magistrate, Jammu, complaining that the Ranbir had accused him of trafficking in women. The man had been actually found shuttling between Jammu and Bombay in suspicious circumstances. I had to undertake arduous journeys to far off places to produce solid evidence proving his nefarious activities. After a number of appearances before the Court, the case against me fell through.

Another case of similar nature was filed against me by one Lachman Singh on August 30, 1927, in the same court. It also met the same fate and I came out unscathed. I had, by quoting facts and figures in the Ranbir, accused Lachman Singh and his wife of working as agents on behalf of a gang abducting women and girls from Jammu and disposing them off in Bombay.

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Once a Magistrate at first claimed from me damages of Rs. 5,000.00 and then withdrew his notice. He was late Sahibzada Mohd. Umar functioning as a Munsiff Magistrate at Samba – my home town, in the year 1927. As a dramatist and a litterateur the Sahibzada enjoyed a great reputation and I was on intimate and friendly terms with him. The public of Samba, however, had some grouse aginst the Magistrate in relation to his court work. The voice of the people in this respect naturally found a place in the hospitable columns of the Ranbir. Thereupon, a senior member of the Jammu bar, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, served me with a notice demanding on behalf of his client, Sahibzada Mohd. Umar, that I should pay as damages a sum Rs. 5,000.00 by way of compensation for the loss of his reputation resulting from the publication of comments against him in the Ranbir or be prepared to face prosecution in a court of law.

The receipt of this notice only steeled my heart and through the medium of my paper I urged upon the State Government the need for immediately setting up of an impartial tribunal to enquire into the allegations against the magistrate after suspending or at least transferring him from Samba in the interest of administration. The magistrate immediately withdrawing his notice and also informing me of his having withdrawn the application he had submitted to the Government seeking permission to launch both civil and criminal proceedings against me.

After some years, the magistrate gave up his service and lent weight of his pen to the literary columns of the Ranbir.

These few encounters will bring home to my readers the nature of difficulties that initially beset the first newspaper of the State in voicing out grievances of the people and in trying to bring about reformation in the social set-up. The receipt of personal threats and minatory letters from persons who felt grieved by the writings in the Ranbir was a common feature those days. All this, however, kept me always on guard. Any act of indifference or complacency on my part in editing the paper would have proved ruinous.

The question before me was not merely to fill up the pages of the Ranbir but what was needed most and was done, was that all the material published in the Ranbir bore the stamp of authenticity. The result was that whatever appeared in the Ranbir came to be regarded as absolutely trustworthy. This greatly enhanced the reputation of the Ranbir and its Editor too.

The campaign that I persistently carried on in the Ranbir against the vilest social evil of the day, the Trafficking in woman, and my successful emergence out of the court cases against me as narrated above, also earned for the Ranbir the title of a social reformer. When the State Government announced the appointment of a committee for the prevention of trafficking in

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women, I was appointed its member-Secretary. Thakar Kartur Singh, then Governor of Jammu, was the president of the Committee. As secretary of the Committee I *inter-alia* prepared a booklet entitled 'The Prevention of Trafficking in Women' underlining this Social curse and the measures to suppress it.

Suppression of infanticide, abolition of untouchability and the forced labour, prevention of infant marriage and juvenile smoking and removal of many other social evils formed chief plank of the Ranbir which can legitimately own credit for the enactment of various measures initiated during the regime of Maharaja Hari Singh in the field of social reforms.

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THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

I have mentioned earlier my encounter with Mr. Wakefield. He had since risen to the position of the Foreign and Political Minister of Maharaja Hari Singh who had succeeded to the throne after the demise of Maharaja Pratap Singh in 1925. Not only the general policy of the Ranbir but my growing contact with the freedom movement in India had turned Mr. Wakefield furious against me. Soon he got an opportunity seeking to crush me.

In British India, Mahatma Gandhi, in pursuance of his civil disobedience movement, started the historic march to Dandi to break salt law on March 12, 1930. It created a great stir from one end of the country to the other which led to the arrest of all prominent Congress leaders including Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Maulana Abulkalam Azad, Sardar Patel and Shri C. Rajagopalachari. The news of the arrest of Mahatama Gandhi spread like wild conflagration. There were hartals and processions throughout the country.

How could Jammu keep behind ? There was a spontaneous hartal. The college and school students came out of their class rooms in their thousands. All business establishments were completely closed. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and others including large number of ladies, took out processions parading the thoroughfares and shouting national slogans. The processionists also made bonfire of foreign clothes. A donkey with a European hat on was the centre of special attraction in these demonstrations. Mr. Wakefield who also held the portfolio of local self-government summoned an extraordinary meeting of the Jammu Municipal Committee at his residence. When he was making a certain query from the Municipal commissioners, the president of the Committee, Pandit Agya Ram, rose to explain something whereupon Mr. Waskefield in an angry pose exclaimed ; *"Ham yeh bakwas sun-na nahin chahta"* (I do not want to hear this nonsense). Pandit Agya Ram spiritedly retorted : "As the Minister has insulted me by the use of such words, I do not want to continue as the president of the Municipal Committee and hereby tender my resignation. "Mr. Wakefield quipped, "very well".

All these things, the unprecedented hartal and the biggest ever demonstration in the history of Jammu, the procession of donkey with a European hat on, the bonfire of foreign clothes, the national slogans and last but not the least the insulting behavior towards the civic chief were prominently published the following day in the form of a special edition of the Ranbir. This upset Mr. Wakefield who had already felt much annoyed particularly at what had

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happened the previous day. He took a copy of the Ranbir with him, had a talk with the Resident-in-Kashmir, then hurried to the place and held long consultations with Maharaja Hari Singh. The result was the issuance of an order signed by the Maharaja himself. The order dated May 9, 1930 read :

"My attention has been drawn to the account in the special issue of the Ranbir dated Baisakh 25, Samvat 1987, corresponding to May 7, 1930, of the disgraceful demonstrations which lately took place in the city of Jammu in connection with the arrest in British India of Mr. Gandhi. The account in question not only gives unnecessary prominence to an affair with which my people have no concern but is highly malicious and grossly misleading so far as the intentions and policy of myself and my Government and the conduct of the Police in relation to the demonstrations in question is concerned. The intensity of public feeling, the strength of the crowd assembled on the occasion, the number of women and school and college boys attending the demonstrations, the extent of the Hartal and its so-called spontaneous character, have all been highly exaggerated and misrepresented. Not content with such wilful misrepresentations the account contains among other inaccuracies the following misstatements:

More can be quoted but the above extracts will suffice to show that the whole meaning and implication of the account is to convey that I and my Government either actively promoted the demonstration or at least connived at it or showed indifference as long as it was non-violent in character. It is unnecessary for me to repudiate such an allegation which carries its own refutation. I have all along held the views that it is not for me, my Government or my people to interfere in the affairs of British India and it has been a cordial article of faith with me to observe scrupulously my treaty obligations with the British Government according to practice of civilized Government. One of these obligations is not to countenance or permit any political demonstration within my territory against the British Government. It has given me great pain to find that the extracts to which I refer above violate this fundamental political principle. They also constitute a flagrant breach of the undertaking given by the Editor and proprietor Lala Mulk Raj Saraf when permission was given by the State Council to him to start the Ranbir vide State Council Resolution No. 8 dated March 18, 1924. I hereby direct that the permission accorded to the publication of the Ranbir be immediately cancelled and its further publication stopped.

"In issuing this order I desire to make it quite clear that it is not my intention to curb in any way the legitimate expression of opinion or fair and just criticism of the policy and acts of myself and my Government. The policy regarding these matters will continue unchanged

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and I shall be quite willing to entertain applications whether in Jammu or in Kashmir or both from other journalists wishing to start another newspaper or newspapers within the State territory so long as their *bona fides* are not in question".

Sd/- Hari Singh
Maharaja
K.C.I.E., K.C.V.O.

Maharaja Hari Singh was generally known for his progressive and independent views. To have to pass an order of such a sweeping nature and in the way it had been done, could only reveal the inherent weakness of the Indian princes *vis-a-vis* the mighty British Empire. The Ranbir was not only the first newspaper of the Jammu and Kashmir State but also remained the only newspaper since its inception in June 1924. The paper had done remarkably well during the few years it had been in existence as borne out by various unsolicited testimonials received from time to time from responsible quarters. Moreover, while publishing account of the Jammu demonstrations the Ranbir had only erred on the side of moderation. It had exercised due care to avoid any impression that the Ruler or the State Government had hand whatsoever in the popular protest against Gandhi Ji's arrest. The British ingenuity, however, gave to the whole affair such a twist as made or perhaps compelled the Maharaja to feel as he did observe, "The whole meaning and implication of the account (as published in special issue of the Ranbir) is to convey that I and my Government either actively promoted the demonstration or at least connived at it or showed indifference so long it was non - violent in character. It is un-necessary for me to repudiate such an allegation which carries its own refutation.

In expressing tremendous public reaction to the arrest of Gandhiji, I little realised that I was needling the British Political Department on a delicate issue and in the process causing a strain in the relationship between the State of Jammu and Kashmir and the British Government. The Ranbir had the unique distinction of getting an order signed by the Ruler himself in which detailed reasons for immediately cancelling the permission accorded to the publication of the Paper, were stated and the treaty rights of the suzerain Power *vis-a-vis* Princely States quoted chapter & verse so much so that the Maharaja pleaded :

"I have all along held the view that it is not for me, my government or my people to interfere in the affairs of British India and it has been a cordial article of faith with me to

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observe scrupulously my treaty obligations with the British Government according to practices of civilized government. One of these obligations is not to countenance or permit any political demonstration within my territory against the British Government. It has given me great pain to find that the extracts to which I refer above violate this fundamental political principle." The order was obviously more an explanation to the Political Department than a fiat against a humble Paper.

The Ranbir was thus sacrificed at the alter of political exigency. I was personally made a special target in as much as the royal order laid down that I alone could not apply to start another newspaper.

The question of breach of any conditions did not at all arise. No conditions whatsoever were attached with the Council Resolution No. 8 dated March 18, 1924 which, as conveyed to me, merely read : "His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur in Council has been pleased to accord permission under section 5 of the Jammu and Kashmir Press and Publications Regulations 1971 to a paper being started by Lala Mulk Raj Saraf B.A."

In the beginning I did make some representations to the Maharaja for reconsideration of his order but it did not evoke any response whatsoever. Each time I met Mr. Wakefield in this connection, I was shown the cold shoulder.

I was, however, determined to have a newspaper of my own. Pandit Ganga Nath Sharma and Lala Shiv Ram Gupta had already worked with me as the joint-editor and the manager of the Ranbir. We three planned to start a newspaper from Lahore. We named it as 'Amar'. Though printed and published at Lahore, it was edited and distributed in Jammu and Kashmir State like the Ranbir. Later on, Pandit Ganga Nath Sharma and myself parted company with Mr. Gupta leaving him in sole charge of the Amar. Immediately afterwards we both in collaboration with two colleagues Shri Vishwa Nath Wadehra, formerly manager of the Ranbir and Shri Kishan Samailpuri, the well known dogri poet, started another paper, the Mashir just like the Amar. The Mashir continued to appear till the resuscitation of the Ranbir in November 1931. It is noteworthy that notwithstanding the clear desire of the Maharaja, as expressed in the order banning the publication of the Ranbir, to entertain applications from journalists other than myself to start another newspaper or newspapers, no paper came to be published within the State territory and the only newspaper that was permitted to appear after the lapse of more than 18 months was again the Ranbir.

This period extending over to 18 months (May 9, 1930 to November 13, 1931) was indeed most crucial in the modern history of Jammu and Kashmir. It witnessed many an upheaval. There were communal clashes in the State. Hundreds of people had been sent behind the bars.

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The *Ahrars* of the Punjab who called themselves nationalist Muslims had begun to pour in the State to participate in a civil disobedience movement with a view to assisting their agitating co-religionists As soon as the *Ahrars* entered the State territory at Suchetgarh, the border town on old Jammu Sialkot road, they were placed under arrest. The number of such arrests swelled to many thousands and five thousands of those arrested had to be consigned to the Punjab. The reaction of Non-Muslims to the Muslim agitation was quite baneful. Mistakes were being committed on all sides. The Muslims, even if it meant to benefit the whole population, as anti-Hindu and hence they were led, rather misled, to almost invariably side with the Government howsoever erring. The seed of communalism thus got deeprooted. There was, in fact, utter lack of that sobering influence which the presence of the Ranbir and its national outlook used to carry. Soon a sense of realism began to dawn on the powers that be. Mr. Wakefield had to leave the State unhonoured, unwept and unsung. Raja Hari Kishan Kaul took over as the Prime Minister of the State. He tried to pacify various sections of the people. Several changes were announced in the administrative set-up of the State. The majority of Muslims, however, continued to rumble. Compelled by the force of circumstances, the State Government in their wisdom thought of reviving the Ranbir. While I was busy as usual, in my office conducting the affairs of the Mashir, I got a telegram from the Prime Minister himself from Srinagar on November 13, 1931, corresponding to Kartik 28, 1988, which read " Orders issued Governor regarding restarting Ranbir"

The order for the revival of the Ranbir was, in fact, as sudden and surprising as was the order for its closing down on May 9, 1930. The State Government appeared to feel much relieved over the reappearance of the Ranbir as indicated by an official statement published in the Statesman of December 1, 1931. It said : "As official of Kashmir State who is in Delhi with the Prime Minister Raja Hari Kishan Kaul yesterday informed a Statesman representative that the ban on the publication of newspaper in the State has been lifted to the extent of permitting the reissue of the Ranbir published weekly in Jammu". I was flooded with messages of congratulations and felicitations on the removal of the ban.

As I had continued to be in active journalism it did not take me long to bring out the Ranbir anew.

Duringa year and a half, the period covered by the suspension of the Ranbir, two notable developments took place. The State Government in April 1931, chose to utilise my services in connection with the proposed establishment of the Jammu and Kashmir Bank. The State Finance Minister, Mr. P.K. Wattal, under his letter No. 261-C dated April 25, 1931 wrote to me:

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"His Highness's Government has been pleased to nominate you as Joint Secretary of the Central Committee for carrying on the work of publicity and educative propaganda and for the collection of share applications of the Jammu and Kashmir State Bank which is to be established shortly."

Taking it as a work of public utility, I gave my consent and began to work in right earnestness in association with Major General Dewan Bishan Das, formerly Prime Minister of the State, who was appointed as the Chairman of the Central Committee, and Wazir Tej Ram the General Treasurer, who was made the Secretary. On May 26, 1931, I was informed that "an allowance of Rs. 150/- per month had been sanctioned in your favour as the Joint Secretary." This set me a thinking. I felt it derogatory to accept any remuneration from the Government for such a social service as it appeared to me. I, therefore, declined to accept any pay and volunteered to work in an honorary capacity. The Finance Minister wrote back to me under his office No. 361-C dated My 16, 1931 "I am glad to learn from the proceedings of the Central Committee that you have volunteered to serve as Joint Secretary without any remuneration and thank you for the public spirit you have shown in the matter."

Later, Colonel E.J.D. Colvin, the new Prime Minister, under his D.O. No. 10383 dated 5-10-1932 said "I have much pleasure in placing on record my appreciation of the good work done by you in connection with the establishment of the State Bank and especially your public spirit in volunteering your services as Joint Secretary in an honorary capacity."

In September 1931, I had been elected as the President of the All India Mahajan Conference, succeeding Lala Mehr Chand Mahajan who become Chief Justice of India after Independence.

In my presidential address delivered at the 16th Annual Session of the All India Mahajan Conference held on October 14-19, 1931, at Shakargarh (now in West Pakistan) I *inter alia* stressed the role of the press in moulding public opinion in favour of social reforms. The Tribune, Lahore, reported on October 20, 1931 : "Two thousand delegates and others attended the 16th All India Mahajan Conference which was presided over by Lala Mulk Raj Saraf, Editor of the Jammu Ranbir. His presidential address contained suggestions regarding the all round betterment of the Mahajan community as an important part of the Indian nation."

The Ranbir re-appeared in November 1931. It was still the only newspaper in the State. In the years to come I had to take part in numerous public activities some of which will be briefly mentioned in the following pages under appropriate chapters.

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THE RATTAN

The Rattan was a child of the Ranbir. The year 1934 saw several newspapers and periodicals coming out in the State. This was mostly due to the relaxation of the State Press Law. All these journals, however, were meant for the adolescent and generally dealt with local socio-economic problems. There was no magazine for the children which in the fast changing world appeared to me an imperative need of the hour. AS a parent and lover of the young, I felt an urge to bring out one. This was the nucleus of the monthly Rattan which made its appearance in December, 1934. Fortunately, it soon acquired an all-India reputation and came to be regarded as one of the three best edited children's magazines in the country.

Mr. Shanti Sarup Nishat (now Dr. S. S. Nishat, Kashmir Trade Agent in Bombay), one of the assistant editors of the Ranbir and both a poet and a writer, was the first Editor of the Rattan with myself as its printer, publisher and director. Two years later my eldest son Om who was still a high school student took over the control of the Rattan. In latter years when Om, free from the University education became an active associate with me in the Ranbir, one of his talented friends Mr. Kundan Lal, a highly educated and competent youngman who is now a Professor in the Delhi University, assumed the editorship of the Ratten. These young intellectuals well versed as they were in the art of writing for the children, were able in due course of time, to enlist co-operation of some eminent writers and specialists in children's literature in the country. All this had tremendously added to the popularity of the Rattan by mid 1940's.

As newsprint was a rationed article in those days and could not be secured in the State without the previous consent of the Resident-in-Kashmir, it became difficult for us to cope with the vastly increasing circulation of the Rattan. In this connection an extract from the letter No. D-7 (P) 45 dated December 8, 1945, from the Director of Civil Supplies, Jammu and Kashmir Government, to the Extra-Assistant to Resident-in-Kashmir, is worth mentioning : "The conductors of the Rattan have made a demand for an additional quota of 200 reams a month on account of its increased circulation which is verified and certified to be 25,000 copies. The educational authorities of those States and British Indian Provinces where Urdu is spoken, have placed the journal on their approved lists. Throughout India, the demand for its copies is, therefore, ever increasing and a fairly large number of orders have been received by the management from individual subscribers and institutions from such distant places as

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Kapurthala, Rampur, Hyderabad, Bhopal, U.P., C.P., Berar, Sind and even Bombay and Madras. His Highness's Government are, therefore, satisfied that the demand of increase in paper ration of the journal is genuine and justified and therefore strongly recommend that on the basis of the certified number of copies in circulation and the demand still continuing, the newsprint ration of the Rattan be increased to 160 reams a month." The Rattan, in fact, had its subscribers even in several Asian and African countries where Urdu-knowing Indians lived.

The annual illustrated special issue of the Rattan "Karan Number" named after Yuvraj (now Maharaja) Karan Singh used to be a unique feature of the Rattan. It provided a great literary treat from year to year. I am told that the presentation copies of the Karan Number continue to adorn the shelf of the rich library owned by the Governor Dr. Karan Singh. On seeing the Annual Number of the Rattan that eminent Urdu poet and litterature Pandit Brij Mohan Dattatrya Kaifi in his letter dated Model Town, Lahore, the 14th April 1937, wrote : "Good God, the material that has been collected for the Number and the excellent way it has been got up is highly commendable. Perhaps the people are not unware that you are the founder of journalism in Jammu and Kashmir State. Just as your well known paper the Rattan is unique and unsurpassable as the first magazine of the children. I wonder whether to prefer your first production Ranbir to the second one or the second to the first one. Not only the public of Jammu and Kashmir but the whole Urdu world should be grateful to you."

Prime Minister Col. Colvin observed on February 23, 1937 : " Mr. Mulk Raj Saraf is the Editor of the Ranbir Jammu, the oldest paper in the State. He has conducted the paper in a responsible manner and has on the whole steered clear of communalism. He is also the director of a beautiful got-up children's magazine entitled the Rattan which brings out an excellent special number on the birthday of Shri Yuvraj Bahadur.

"Mr. Saraf's outlook is liberal and he appears to have properly understood the true responsibility of a journalist and publicman. I hope he will continue to maintain the good traditions that he has as a publicist built for himself. I think that he is serving the State and the people in a commendable manner".

Shri Gopalaswami Ayyanger who was the Prime Minister of the State during the second world war in his message on March 18, 1943, observed : "The Rattan's special numbers have been widely appreciated both in the State and outside. It has always maintained a good standard and has provided informing matter of a varied nature particularly of value to children. Educational effort in the State has been and is making rapid progress and the service which journals like the Rattan contribute in this cause is always welcome."

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Mr. Wajahat Hussain I.C.S., Home and Education Minister, wrote on March 2, 1937 "Rattan is the most popular and useful magazine. I have been its regular subscriber since its birth. Its articles have been contributed by a number of eminent men in the world of Urdu literature and I have always been impressed by the high tone of these articles".

Shri B.N. Rau, Prime Minister who later became the Constitutional Adviser to the Government of India, in his message on March 16, 1944, said : "Today is the birthday of Sri Yuvraj Bahadur and a day of general rejoicing. He is still in his boyhood and he lives the life of an ordinary school boy, claiming none of the privileges of his rank. It is, therefore, natural that he has come to be regarded as a symbol of the youth of the State and, following a kindly custom, I now send this message of good wishes to all the young boys and girls of the State, as if his birthday were also their."

Once I made request to Maharaja Hari Singh to ask the Yuvraj to send a message in his own hand for the Karan Number of the Rattan. In reply Col. Dr. Sir Kailash Narain Haksar who was tutor to Yuvraj Bahadur and also personal Adviser to the Maharaja sent me a letter in Urdu dated January 20, 1943, saying, "His Highness has commanded that in view of his being very young, it would not be proper to publish a message, however brief, from the Yuvraj. Moreover, he should not yet be made to feel that he had acquired a status and rank that every word coming from him was like a sermon to the masses."

Unfortunately the partition dislocated the arrangements for the publication of the Rattan. The services of some of its artists and caligraphists based in Lahore were no more available. The Rattan made its last appearance in September, 1947, when it was at the height of its glory. Even after the lapse of nearly 20 years now hardly a week passes without an order or two being received by me from some part of India and Pakistan for the supply of the Rattan. An attempt was made to revive the Rattan in the from of a Hindi monthly in 1965. It was published for a few months under the editorship of my eldest grandson, Subhash. But for various reasons the attempt had to be given up.

In mid 1950's two new magazines were started by me, one Monthly 'THE KASHMIR INDUSTRY' and the other a socio-tourist Weekly 'THIS WEEK IN KASHMIR'. The working editor of the 'K.I.' was my eldest son. Om Saraf and that of the T.W.I.K. my youngest son, Sat Saraf who later joined the Hindustan Times and is at present working as its Deputy Chief Reporter in New Delhi. Both the periodicals, however, did not last long and had to be stopped for lack of sufficient funds.

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AS A PRINTER

When the Ranbir took birth in 1924, there was no private printing press in Jammu. I had to setup the one. As indicated earlier the permission to start the paper included the permission to start a printing press. With extremely meagre resources at my disposal, I could hardly afford to establish a power-driven plant. It was, therefore, decided to have a hand-driven litho press for which the skilled labour was employed on piece-work basis from the local Government Press. It was only in 1932, some time after re-appearance of the Ranbir, that a foreign made electric printing machine alongwith an experienced machineman Pandit Balak Ram was imported from Lahore. By then a few more local papers had come into being and the financial position of the Ranbir had somewhat improved. The District Magistrate of Jammu, Colonel Baldev Singh Pathania, inspected the Public Printing Press as it was named, on November 3, 1934 and *inter alia* observed : "About a dozen men are employed on different duties in this Press. Almost all the Urdu newspapers of Jammu are printed here. It is a great effort on the part of Lala Mulk Raj Saraf who has vast experience having worked in various capacities in the public. With such a man as the proprietor, it is going to be a grand show in due course."

The power-driven machine indeed proved a great boost for the newspapers from Jammu as well as Mirpur and Poonch. As a printer I was rather automatically made responsible for the maintenance of certain standards of the printed word not only in my own paper but also all other newspapers printed at my press. Not infrequently, I had to pay the price for being a printer whenever the Ranbir or any other paper printed at my press was victimised. At times, I had to suffer for the printing of other material also such as the posters and pamphlets which began to be published with growing public activity. With the passage of time my printing concern did become a grand show. I bought several other machines in 1940's all of which, however, were disposed off in 1950's. It will not be out of the place here to recollect some of the memorable experiences in my capacity as the keeper of a printing press.

The Inkishaf Jammu of January 20, 1936, printed at my press, published an article captioned "Rajputs do not require Rao Bahadur Thakur Kartar Singh : they want Wazir Zorawar Singh." Rao Bahadur was the Finance Minister at that time while the Wazir was the famous Dogra General who conquered Ladakh more than 100 years ago. This was taken by the State Government as 'an attack on a minister in his ministerial capacity likely to bring the Government of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur into contempt.' A letter from one Thakur Kashmiri

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Lal Parihar of Kishtwar published in the same issue of the paper was also considered by the Government as 'likely to bring into hatred or contempt Rajputs, a class of His Highness's subjects.' Another article against Rao Bahadur Thakur Kartar Singh in the issue of the Inkishaf of January 27, 1936, was regarded by the Government as 'likely to bring into hatred or contempt the Government established by law in the State by holding up to ridicule one of the ministers.'

All these articles were considered by the Government objectionable as 'violating the provisions of section 10, sub-section (I) of the Jammu and Kashmir State Press and Publications Regulation No. 1 of Samvat 1989'. On February 20, 1936, I, as the keeper of the Press where the Inkishaf was printed, was served with a notice by the officiating Prime Minister, Sir Barjor Dalal, to make a deposit, as security of Rs. 500.00 in cash, before March 9, 1936, in the office of the District Magistrate, Jammu, 'otherwise the consequences of failure to deposit security under section 20 of the Press regulation will follow'.

I deposited the amount under protest. On June 4, 1936, Prime Minister Colvin cancelled the earlier order and refunded my deposit.

In 1937 there was a cow-agitation in Jammu when the contempt of court proceedings were initiated against me. This was a sequel to the printing of a poster at my press announcing the holding of public meeting by the Hindu Sikh Naujawan Sabha to protest against the State High Court decision reducing the sentence of three accused persons in a cow-slaughter case. The legality of the poster was definitely challengeable. In fact, the poster had got printed in my absence from the town. But then a mass agitation followed. I was externed from the town as a press correspondent. The agitation came to an end after 35 days of hartal in Jammu. Consequently the contempt proceedings against me were also dropped.

In late 1940's when my relations were unfortunately somewhat strained with the then Prime Minister, Sheikh Abdullah, and the Ranbir was soon to cease publication, the text-book business had been nationalised. The services of all the private presses were requisitioned to ensure prompt publication of the approved manuscripts. Mine being the foremost printing press in the State was also allocated a portion of the task after necessary formalities had been completed. But hardly half of the job was done, when it appeared to a lieutenant of the Sheikh that I was perhaps being unduly patronised. Mr. J.N. Sharma, the head of the printing department, visited me at my residence and apprised me of his predicament in face of the instructions he had received from the above. I immediately asked my manager to deliver back to the authorities the undone part of the assignment.

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The Kashmir Constituent Assembly came into being in November, 1851. While the representatives of the people had thus become sovereign, the new constitution could be given to the people of the State only on January 26, 1956. In between as a keeper of the press, I had to wage and lose my last battle. The Kashmir Mail–a local Urdu weekly edited by Bakshi Bodh Raj Manawari, a gentleman of great integrity, and printed in my press, had published an article which Sheikh Abdullah's Cabinet considered derogatory to their regime. I was ordered to deposit with the District Magistrate, Jammu, a security of Rs. 1,000.00. Considering this to be out of tune with the spirit of the times, I approached the State High Court for setting aside the Cabinet order. The full bench of the High Court dismissed my prayer, *inter alia* observing. "There is no doubt that the right of freedom of discussion and the liberty of the press are fundamental doctrines of democracy..... But at the same time the Court has to construe the Act as it is. The Court is bound to give effect to the language of the Act so long as it is in existence even though it thinks that the provisions of the Act have not kept pace with the changed time."

I, however, did not deposit the security demanded. Instead, I decided to dispose off all my printing machines. After the disappearance of the Ranbir in 1950, my interest in them as a mere commercial concern was already on the wane. By about late 1950's I had all my stores auctioned. This enabled me to devote my single minded-attention to journalism as a newsman.

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THE RANBIR AT 18 AND LATER

The Ranbir completed its eighteenth year of service on June 24, 1942. It was indeed an occasion of great joy for all those associated with the birth and growth of the first newspaper in the State. Naturally I was the recipient of numerous messages of greetings from the friends including prominent brother journalists and other publicmen belonging to various shades of opinion in and outside Jammu and Kashmir. There could be no greater acknowledgment of the impartiality with which the Ranbir had been presenting 'the sacred facts' to its readers. I also felt inclined to construe such wide-spread appreciation as an ample measure of success the Ranbir had achieved in offering its free comment with malice towards none in regard to the various complex problems facing the people of the State. Reproduced below are the extracts from many congratulatory messages on the attainment of adolescence by the Ranbir.

Moulana Zafar Ali Editor the Zamindar Lahore and a member of the Central Legislative Assembly : Because of its impartial views and harmonious outlook the Ranbir is popular amongst all sections of people of Jammu and Kashmir. Lala Mulk Raj Saraf deserves much praise that amidst many difficulties and obstacles for the truthspeaking newsmen in the Indian States, he has been successfully conducting himself as an editor.

Mahashay Krishan Editor the Daily Pratap Lahore : I have known Lala Mulk Raj Saraf for a considerable period of time. He is an able and experienced newspaperman. I have nothing but praise for the way he has crossed over hurdles and made his paper a success. The Ranbir has indeed played a conspicuous part in the present awakening in the State.

Shri Ranbir Chief Editor the Daily Milap Lahore : Lala mulk Raj Saraf can feel well proud of the services the Ranbir has rendered to the people of Jammu and Kashmir State for the last eighteen years. God has granted him a resolute head and a determined heart; hence he has been able to brave all difficulties in order to serve the people.

Pandit Mela Ram Wafa Editor the Vir Bharat Lahore : I know Lala Mulk Raj Saraf from the time we both used to work in the daily Bande Matram started by late lamented Lala Lajpat Rai. Shri Saraf possesses keen intellect and congenial disposition and is an independent newspaperman. Both my esteemed friend and the Ranbir have contributed a good deal in the all-round awakening that we find in Jammu and Kashmir today. The Ranbir can also rightly claim to have set up a high standard of journalism in this part of the country.

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Munshi Mohd Din Fauq Editor the Kashmiri Magazine Lahore : The Ranbir has suffered for its independent thinking. Both the Government and the people feel the impact of its writings.

Pandit Prem Nath Kannath Editor the Daily Martand Srinagar: It is our good fortune that we have a journalist of the standing of Lala Mulk Raj Saraf amidst us. He is above regional prejudices and is a true nationalist. The Ranbir has always stood rock-like against the adversaries.

Mr. J.N. Zutshi Editor the Kashmir Sentinel Srinagar : It is extremely difficult to beat the distinct record set up by the Ranbir in the service of the people during the last eighteen years.

Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz Editor the Hamdard Srinagar : These past eighteen years that the Ranbir has been in existence have witnessed a great political upheaval in Jammu and Kashmir. The Ranbir can rightly feel proud of being the first newspaper of the State. I feel no hesitation in asserting that the Ranbir by its efforts in the cause of the country has contributed its due share in making the State progress so far. Its inoffensive policy, the non-communal approach and consistency are commendable.

Pandit Kashap Bandhu Editor the Desh Srinagar : The journalism in Jammu and Kashmir not only started with the Ranbir, but it also took strides because of the Ranbir and every newspaperman should feel proud of what the Ranbir has been able to achieve.

Pandit Dina Nath Mast Kashmiri Editor the Rahbar Srinagar: I always look upon Lala Mulk Raj Saraf as Lord Northcliff of Jammu and Kashmir State. Even the worst detractors of Mr. Saraf admit the spirit of enterprise and determination with which he has guided the destinies of the Ranbir.

Lala Hans Raj Mahajan Vakil, a great Social Reformer : The role the Ranbir has played in the political awakening amongst the people of Jammu and Kashmir State, is unrivalled. Its popularity is based on its true nationalistic approach and its solid and useful writings. The attractive getup of the Ranbir and its regularity have become proverbial. For its treatment of various subjects the Ranbir stands ahead of even some best known newspapers of the Punjab. There is hardly any matter of public importance which the Ranbir does not reflect.

Pandit Prem Nath Dogra (presently State Jnna Sangh Chief): June 24 is the red letter day in the annals of Jammu and Kashmir. It was on this day eighteen years ago that the first newspaper of Jammu and Kashmir came into existence. From its very inception the Ranbir has been a great supporter of the rights of the people irrespective of religion, caste or region. Perhaps few people are aware that for the sake of journalism Lala Mulk Raj Saraf,

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an old graduate voluntarily gave up a Government job. This spirit of sacrifice and selflessness has brought the Ranbir in the fore front of the best newspapers in the country.

Mr. D.P. Dhar, President All-Kashmir Students' Conference (presently a minister in the State Cabinet) : The Ranbir is the outcome of brave and incessant efforts on the part of out distinguished journalist, Lal Mulk Raj Saraf. The Ranbir has always maintained the highest tradition of journalism.

Chaudhari Chulam Abbas President All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference : For a paper to continue to serve the people to the best of its ability for such a long time, is in itself a matter of great satisfaction. This is mainly due to the deep understanding, peaceful disposition and non-communal outlook of Lala Mulk Raj Saraf. One happy feature of the Ranbir from the public point of view is that it considers as its journalistic duty to criticise the Government whenever there is need for it.

Wazir Ganga Ram, the Opposition Leader in the Legislative Assembly : I personally know with what pleasurable inclination Maharaja Pratap Singh used to get the Ranbir read out to him regularly. I feel the greatest satisfaction and happiness in the fact that Lala Mulk Raj Saraf has conducted his paper in a very commendable manner and with perfect dignity.

Major-General Samunder Khan Bahadur, Srinagar : I am a regular reader of the Ranbir. It has fought and won many a battle in the field of social reforms. Its great merit lies in the fact that it has steered clear of communalism.

Khan Sahib Mirza Ghulam Mustaffa Landlord, Srinagar : I have seen several newspapers come and gone like bubbles of water but the Ranbir continues to live because of its intrinsic worthy and praiseworthy policy. It not only lives but is also flourishing and progressing and is looked upon with great esteem by every section of the people.

Sardar Mool Singh Khosla Retired State Secretary : I am an old and regular subscriber of the Ranbir. The determined manner in which Lala Mulk Raj Saraf has nursed this plant is commendable.

Khawaja Ghulam-ul-Saiyidain Director Education Jammu and Kashmir State : The Ranbir belongs to the category of newspapers that are meant to serve the society, to add to the informative knowledge of the people and to diffuse true ideas among the public. Only such papers can guide masses to distinguish between right and wrong.

Dr. Mohd. Din Taseer Principal Amar Singh Degree College, Srinagar : As a literary man I can positively assert that the language used by the Ranbir is not wrong and the manner of its writing is attractive and I always read it with zeal and flavour.

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It may be mentioned here that from January 27, 1941, I experimented with the publication of the last page of the Ranbir in Hindi to cater to the Hindi-knowing people. But it was a matter of regret that except for a letter of appreciation from Pandit Amar Nath Kak Advocate, then Deputy President of the State Assembly, there was little public enthusiasm and the Hindi supplement had to be given up after a few weeks.

From August 30, 1943, the Ranbir began to be published twice a week. This proved a tremendous success and I was soon encouraged to seek permission to convert it into a daily but the authorities would not agree presumably in view of great tension that prevailed at that time all over the country as a result of full scale clash between the resurgent nationalist forces and the foreign rule. It was only on December 1, 1946, when the shape of things to come had become sufficiently clear at the national level that the Ranbir was allowed to appear as a daily.

1946 was also the year which marked the centenary of the Amritsar treaty between the British East India Company and Maharaja Gulab Singh. The treaty laid the foundation of the modern State of Jammu and Kashmir. The Ranbir, on this occasion issued a voluminous special issue titled "Jammu and Kashmir Encyclopedia" which has been recognised as a document of great historical importance. The following message by Maharaja Hari Singh adorned the opening page of the Encyclopedia : "A hundred years ago, my great grand-father Shri Maharaja Gulab Singh Ji founded the Jammu and Kashmir State, thereby bringing about the consolidation of the contiguous territories of Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit etc to their lasting benefit. To commemorate the centenary of that historic event Lala Mulk Raj Saraf proprietor of the Ranbir has undertaken the publication of the present volume which, I feel sure, will be of interest to readers within and without the State, I commend Lala Mulk Raj Saraf's enterprise and wish it all success."

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ALL STATE EDITORS' MEET

With the growth of journalism and increase in the number of newspapers and other periodicals that came to be published in the State, the question of getting together naturally began to interest their editors. At first an All Jammu and Kashmir Journalists Association was formed in jammu with myself as its President. It had its branch in Srinagar also. After some time there sprang up two regional bodies, one in Jammu with the old label and the other in Srinagar named the Kashmir Newspapers' Society. On June 30, 1943, the Society entertained Shri P.T. Chandra, Editor the Tribune, and Mr. Shiva Rao, the New Delhi representative of the Hindu and the Manchester Guardian. Besides the editors of local papers, prominent publicmen including Sheikh Abdullah and Pandit Jia Lal Kilam were also present. I also happened to be there. It was on this occasion that the idea of holding a session of All Jammu and Kashmir Newspaper Editors' Conference was mooted. On my return to Jammu I discussed the matter with the local colleagues and they all agreed with their Kashmir friends. Accordingly, on July 7, 1943, at a meeting sponsored by the Kashmir Newspapers' Society under the presidentship of Khawaja Sadar-ud-Din Mujahid, Editor the Khalid, a reception committee was formed. Pandit Prem Nath Kannah, Editor the Martand, was elected the Chairman with Mr. Mujahid and Pandit Gwasha Lal Kaul, Editor the Kashmir Chronicle, as the Vice- Presidents, Mr. J.N. Wali, Editor the Kashmir Times, as the General Secretary, Sardar Raghbir Singh Mukat, Editor the Shamsher, as the Secretary, Pandit Shambhu Nath Kaul Nazir, Editor the Vakil, as the Publicity Secretary, Sardar Gurparb Singh, Editor the Khalsa Gazette, as the General Treasurer and Khawaja Ghulam Rasul Arif, Editor the Khidmat, as the Accountant. Several sub-committees were also setup.

A sum of rupees one thousand was collected on the spot. It was also decided at the meeting to invite Shri Tushar Kanti Ghosh, Editor the Amrit Bazar Patrika, to inaugurate the conference. Later, the reception committee in consultation with the Jammu Journalists asked me to preside over the deliberations of the 3-day conference which was scheduled to commence in Srinagar on August 19, 1943.

At a meeting held in Jammu on July 16, 1943, under the presidentship of Pandit Vishwa Nath Kerni, Editor the Sudarshan, the local journalists resolved to make Srinagar conference a complete success. There was great enthusiasm among them and they also decided to hold the All State Conference in Jammu and bear all its expenses in case it was not possible to

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hold the session of Srinagar due to the imposition of section 144 Cr. P.C. there. A sub-committee was setup to draft resolutions to be put before the session.

A grand welcome was given at Jammu by the local journalists to Shri Tushar Kanti Ghosh on his arrival by train from Calcutta on the morning of August 19, 1943. After a brief stay in Jammu, Mr. Ghosh accompanied by the president-elect besides Pandit Vishwa Nath Kerni, Mr. Balraj Puri, editor the Pukar, Chowdhari Mohd Shafi, Joint Editor the Sudarshan, Raizada Ajudhia Nath Vaid, Editor the Usha, and Kaviraj Vaishnu gupta, Editor the Desh Sewak, left for Srinagar. At Qazi Gund Mr. Ghosh and the party were warmly received on behalf of the Reception Committee, by Sarvashri Mujahid, Wali, Shambhu Nath Kaul, Gurparb Singh and Kanshi Nath Aima. Qazi Gund had been tastefully decorated. People had come even from adjoining villages to cheer the visiting newsmen. After tea at the dak bungalow, the party proceeded to Srinagar where thousands of people had assembled in the Lal Chowk (Red-square) to receive them. Those present included besides the local journalists, member of the Praja Sabha (the State Assembly), leaders of the various political and social bodies and other distinguished gentry. At Hazuri Bagh where a big decorated pandal had been put up, Mr. Ghosh was introduced to the newsmen who included besides all those named above, Lala Gopal Dutt Mengi, Joint Editor the Desh Sewak, Lala Girdhari Lal Anand, Editor the Anand, Khawaja Ghulam Qadir Bandey, representative of the Prabhat Poonch, Comrade Trilok Chand, Joint Editor the Such, Mirapur, Mr. Dharam Vir, representative of the Sadaqat, Mirpur, Seth Shakuntala Chief Editor the Usha, Kumari Sushila Tuli of the Usha, Sardar Mohinder Singh, Editor the Watan, Pandit Girdhari Lal Dogra, Honorary Editor the Kisan, and Mr. S.S. Nishat of the Hamdard.

A few journalists from the Punjab also attended the session as fraternal delegates. These included Mr. Hamid, Editor the Eastern Times, Lahore, Mr. Gian Chand Kanwal, Editor the Massihai-Jadid, and the President of the Christian Editors' Conference, Lahore, and Mr. P.D. Saggi–a freelance.

The plenary session of the conference was inaugurated on August 20, 1943, by Shri Tushar Kanti Ghosh. He felt proud to have come in touch with newspapermen in Jammu and Kashmir. This reminded him, he said, of 'old ties with Kashmir'. The reference pertained to the sensational disclosures made by the Amrit Bazar Patrika in 1885 regarding British conspiracy to dethrone Maharaja Pratap Singh. Pandit Prem Nath Kannah in his welcome address stressed the role that newspapers could play in bringing about all-round development in the country. He said. "It is our good fortune that a newspaper editor of the standing of Shri Mulk Raj

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Saraf with over a quarter of a century's experience in journalism at his back, has accepted to lead the all Jammu and Kashmir Newspaper Editors' Conference."

In my Presidential Address, I said *inter alia* :

"As I stand here today my thoughts are irresistibly turned to the journalism in the State, which, like an infant, is yet in its swaddling clothes and is passing through transitional stages. As such, it is needless to point out the comparatively speaking journalism in the State falls short of the required standard of talent, prestige and perfection–traits which have invariably characterised the journalism in British India. But we need not be sorry on that account as you know childhood is imperceptibly followed by youth as day follows the night. We are really optimistic about the great progress made by journalism in the State in the brief history of its existence despite unfavourable circumstances and extreme difficulties with which it is beset. This incidentally provides us with a proof positive that the State journalists are alive to the responsibilities which are lodged on their shoulders.

"Journalism is undoubtedly an exacting and arduous mission whose scope is not merely confined to the publication of the news. It horizon is wide and a true journalist would be failing in his duty if he does not make a dispassionate study of day-to-day evenrs in right perspective, offer fearless comments couched in decent and appropriate language on the political, economic cultural, social and other aspects of life. Apparently it seems to be quite easy but really speaking its completion involves hard labour, well balanced judgment and prompt despatch of business. What is a newspaper? An echo of the public voice. And what is the public voice? Nothing but the voice of truth; *vox populi vox dei*–the voice of the people is the voice of God. A journalist who hesitates in raising his voice for upholding truth and justice cannot deserve the honour of being called an editor; he is just like a beggar who uses his paper as a beggar's bowl.

"Long before the advent of journalism when monarchical and oligarchical forms of Government were prevalent, rulers many a time went out in disguise to keep themselves in touch with the public opinion. Gradually this primitive way of gathering information developed into full-fledged journalism based on organised and scientific lines. And today as you all know, press is a mighty power—'the fourth estate of the realm.' I cannot do better than quote Sir John Browning who has aptly expressed as to how journalism exercises a healthy influence on all walks of life :

But mightiest of the mighty means, on which the arm of progress leans,
Man's noblest mission to advance
His woes assuage, his weal enhance

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His rights enforce, his wrongs redress—
Mightiest of mighty is the press.

"So far as the primary duty of an editor *i.e.* the publication of news is concerned, he has to discharge it honestly and whole-heartedly. He has to cater for almost all the shades of interest and taste of his readers and not limit it exclusively to his personal choice. In the publication of news he has to bear in mind that they are based on true facts. One true news is worth more than hundred of false and baseless rumours. Another guiding principle of true journalism is that a newspaper should in no case be made an instrument for grinding one's own axe. An editor should see that his very personality is lost in the glorification of high ideals. The tenets of journalism go so far as to require of him to invariably merge the first person singular 'I' into plural 'we'. He should act as a mirror to the public opinion losing his identity in it. So far as the creation and formation of public opinion is concerned, the duty of an editor is all the more difficult. Sometimes he shall have to make great sacrifices in order to surmount hardships and obstacles that would confront him in the efficient discharge of his duties. Acts of oppression and suppression, fear of the rich and the temptations of filthy lucre have been brought into play all over the world to gag the press, not to speak of unfortunate India where even in ordinary circumstances the press has often to face innumerable difficulties in the mere expression of public opinion. All this can be safely attributed to our slavery political as well as mental. This slavery is the root cause of our helplessness and discomfiture. Is it not then our sacred duty to shake off the shackles eating into the very vitals of our nation? Besides the Government, there are also other forces which are bent upon thwarting the honest working of the press. It is really a Herculean task to cleanse the Augean stables and to steer the ship of journalism clear of many dangerous rocks–the iron grips of mighty potentates, irresistible temptations of mammon and innumerable other evails to which human nature is hair. This is not all. A journalist has to keep his readers abreast of the changing events of the ever changing world, expose the crooked designs of the authorities and to give vent to the public opinion in such a way that its grievances may be redressed, wrongs rectified, rights preserved and domocratic principles upheld. In short, the all-round duties of a journalist consist in condemning high-handedness, uprooting cruelty, defending the oppressed and the downtrodden, putting a stop to injustice, helpless to provide food for the hungry and employment for the unemployed removing social evils, and imparting education to the public for their mental and spiritual development.

"The press has always proved a great blessing to any nation. It has maintained public morale and saved the people from degeneration and extinction in the darkest hour of national

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history when all other sources failed to guide the country. To quote an instance, the British Press has stood the nation in good stead and has rendered invaluable services at the present critical juncture in saving the country from the darkest clouds. It is no small measure due to the press that today the allies are visualising the immediate prospects of victory.

"The valuable part played by the Indian Press in infusing the spirit of nationalism among the people constitutes a glorious landmark in the history of our movement for freedom. Let us cast a glance on that ancient period of Indian history when the people loved to regard their kings as the incarnation of God, and guided by the same principles of Divine Right of Kings, they felt no hesitation in looking upon even the British Government as the '*Mai Bap*' ; and let us also visualise the present-day India which sees its very salvation in raising the slogan of 'Quit India'. The role of the Indian press in bringing about such momentous changes as envisaged above cannot be overemphasized. Despite the political gulf and other differences of opinion, the Indian press has left no stone unturned to uphold those democratic principles for the preservation of which the Allies today claim to be fighting. We wish the Indian press were as free and unfettered as that of independent countries. It would have then made known to the world that it could perform wonders in safeguarding all the more zealously the principles of truth and justice. But to me the freedom of press does not mean the freedom whose fanciful vision is conceived by the fertile brain of Sir Sulfan Ahmed, Information Member, the Government of India.

"In Indian States the freedom of press is only nominal which is perhaps the outcome of our being miserably in a State of double slavery. So far as Jammu and Kashmir State is concerned the freedom of press is a novelty. Though the press is of recent growth here, it is not devoid of absorbing interest. I hope you would permit me to give a brief history of the growth of the press in the State, and to show how it came into existence. Before 1924 there was neither any newspaper, nor was the Government prepared to permit any paper to be started. I fully remember the time when in the April 1921, the State Government did not consider it advisable even to entertain my application for stating a paper in the State. Another application which was made in May 1921, for the same purpose, was, however, entertained but it was ordered thereon that the starting of a newspaper could not be allowed. A third application was made in April 1922, but I was informed in reply that the Maharaja was not inclined to grant the required permission. At last on march 18, 1924, these efforts were crowned with success when the Maharaja-in-Council was graciously pleased to accord permission to a paper being started by me. A sum of Rs. 500.00 was deposited as security with the District

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Magistrate. Thus on June 24, 1924, came out the Ranbir, the first newspaper of the State. Till first July, 1932, no other paper was allowed to be started. During this period a great awakening and momentous changes were taking place all over the world and the people of the State could not remain unaffected by them. In view of the rapidly changing conditions, the Jammu and Kashmir Government was obliged to relax to some extent the ion grip of its press law. As a result thereof some facilities were given for the publication of newspapers. The number of papers and magazines that appeared during the course of these eleven years can be estimated to be in the neighbourhood of 100. Some of them ceased publication because of financial stringencies and other unavoidable difficulties, a few fell victim to the policy of the Government. At present their number is about 50. But this does not and should not by any means connote that the press in Jammu and Kashmir wields power or is in any way the true mouthpiece of the public opinion. The reason for this is not far to seek; a large number of papers depend for their very existence on the mercy of the Government. The financial condition of most of the papers is usually far from satisfactory. Even from the point of view of standard some of them reveal a deplorable state of affairs. They are tolerated and sometimes helped by the Government merely because their existence instead of being the custodian of the rights of masses, is beneficial only to the administration. In order to maintain this state of affairs the Government has cleverly devised a classification of papers which usually compells most of them to curry its favour by hook or by crook. This classification is given a three-fold form. To the A-list belong those fortunate papers which are the recipient of precious 'Royal-Robe' in the shape of Government advertrisements. The B-list papers are favoured with all sorts of press notes and communiques which they are expected to publish without any remuneration. In the C-list are huddled together those papers which are the worst offenders in the eyes of the Government and they are deprived of all the benefits and charities accruing from the publication of official advertisements, notes etc. The most striking feature of this classification is that a paper can be arbitrarily transferred from on list to another at the sweet will of the Government which has made a rule to revise these list every six months. The standard of classification which is fixed by the concerned department is merely an eyewash. This classification of papers is surely an Alladin's Lamp in the hands of the Government by which it can ingeniously make the ordinary papers dance to any tune. This arbitrary classification has not only strengthened the hands of the Government to take full advantage of the financial handicaps of most of the papers but is also contributing to the lowering of the standard of the State press. It is quite evident that this method does not become of a civilized Government; nor should it ever be tolerated by a votary of journalism. The sooner this classification is done

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away with, the better will it be for the proper cultivation and maintenance of journalistic standards.

"The State press has yet another grievance to ventilate. It is but rarely that the Government has tried to take the press into its confidence and has availed itself of its co-operation in matters of public importance. But for this there would not have existed a wide gulf between the view points of the Public and the Government. The absence of such an important body as a Press Advisory Committee, even at the present critical times through which we are passing, is a conclusive proof of the fact, if proof at all is needed, that the State Government is quite indifferent to the importance and the power of the press. In order to ascertain the greatness and power of the press, I would refer here to the valedictory speech recently delivered by His Excellency the Vicerory of India, Lord Linlithgo, in the Central Legislature, in which he rightly recognised the meritorious services rendered by the Press of India.

"Besides, the newspapers in the State have to face another calamity these days–the scarcity of newsprint which has endangered their very existence. There are newspapers that have not received at all any Quotas or Ration Cards and those who are fortunate in getting them, are experiencing numerous difficulties in procuring the requisite newsprint. It, therefore, behoves the Government to adopt better and more effective measures to discharge its duty in this respect so that paper may enjoy a breathing space in the present suffocating atmosphere.

"I have also to make a few submission to my brother journalists. Though it is presumptuous on my part to suggest anything to such luminaries as I find sitting before me, yet the responsibilities that you have devolved on me to preside over your deliberations necessitate that I should make bold to say a few words in this connection. Journalism occupies a very high position in society and to maintain its prestige is the sacred duty of every journalist. For the accomplishment of this task no amount of sacrifice is too big. The press is not only free intrinsically but it has also undertaken upon itself the responsibility of being the torch-bearer of liberty for all the human beings. The press is a mighty force which can be used entirely according to your own selected angle of vision. It is up to you to use it for destructive or constructive purposes. The power of the press, you must know, is neither a gift bestowed on us by any capitalist nor an estate conferred on us by any Government. It is a trust placed in our hands by the people and to use it honestly is our conscientious duty. We should not be led, rather misled, by any communal considerations nor anything else should 'dwarf' us in the efficient discharge of our public duties. This power of press should certainly be exercised without any fear, favour or prejudice in uprooting cruelty and injustice and in advocating the cause of the oppressed and the down-trodden, the inarticulate labourers and farmers, and the

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dumb-driven indigents. No heed should be paid to any, sectional or communal, narrow or personal considerations. We should not be sentimental but realistic and should whole-heartedly follow the dictates of natural laws in this respect.

"At present our country is passing through difficult times. We are surrounded on all sides by clouds of darkness. It is for us to light the torch of guidance to lead the people through the right path to a safe destination. Our masses are steeped in illiteracy and ignorance and hunger stares them in their face. Is it not our bounden duty to ventilate the grievances of the helpless and the oppressed and try our level best to get these redressed? We have also to bring home to the people that no from of capitalistic Government is acceptable to us but only a full-fledged responsible Government under the aegis of His Highness the Maharaja which alone can act as a panacea for all our ills.

"The world is in the throes of an all-embracing total war which is adversely affecting our lives. We shall have to deliver our country safe from its evil affects. It is high time that we should present a united front to all the enemies of freedom and democracy, but it is only possible when we sink our differences, forget our senseless quarrels, and regard ourselves as the sons of the same soil which should be the touch-stone of our equality and brotherhood. The conviction that a national movement can alone raise us from the depth of humiliation and lead us into the goal of freedom, must be our political creed. Had the Government of India the sense of sobriety and the patience to listen to the voice of the press and sought the co-operation of the national leaders, the existing deadlock would have been conspicuous by its absence. We are of firm conviction that if even today this co-operation is sought the present difficulties would vanish in no time. This would make our country absolutely safe from the onslaught of our enemies and keep high the flag of freedom and democracy, similarly the co-operation of the Jammu and Kashmir Government with the national leaders to whom the welfare of the masses is dear to their heart, can guarantee better times for us and can transform our present adversity into prosperity. It is just possible that the political jugglers, who in order to amuse themselves or keep the Government in good humour, are misleading the country with their ever-changing somersaults, may prove useful for achieving their private ends, but these tactics are quite untimely which acting like the intoxication of opium will induce a profound slumber on the country from which there will be no hope of its awakening for centuries to come.

"My last but not the least request is that nothing can be accomplished without an organisation and so long as the journalists do not work as an organised body, they can never attain success. We have to reckon with a large number of our enemies and hostile forces and

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we shall have to be on the quivive to save ourselves from their evil designs. We have got to be fully armed to combat and destroy evil, but this is possible only when we are well-organised, know how to make a common stand and consider it to be our duty to sacrifice our individuality for the sake of collective good. It is then and then alone that we can fulfil our mission, glorify our profession and safeguard our rights."

The Conference concluded on August 21, 1943. The Amirt Bazar Patrika reported among other things "About 8,000 people attended it. Besides the journalists, prominent citizens, municipal commissioners, Assembly members, lawyers, professors, doctors, business magnates and public leaders were present. Among those on the dias included Rai Bahadur Himmat Singh, Revenue Minister, Sheikh Abdullah, President National Conference, and Pandit Jia Lal Kilam, President Bar Association. About 60 journalists from the State and half in dozen from the Punjab participated in the deliberations".

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PRIME MINISTER'S FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE

For the first time in the history of journalism in Jammu and Kashmir, the representatives of the Press were invited to meet the Prime Minister of the State in his office at a press conference in Jammu on February 13, 1944. The room which is now occupied by the Full Bench of the State High Court in the old Secretariat premises, was packed to capacity.

Sir B.N. Rau took over as Prime Minister from Sir K.N. Haksar on February 9, 1944. On February 12, 1944, the new Prime Minister expressed his desire to meet the press and exchange views with them. A meeting of the All Jammu and Kashmir Newspaper Editors' Conference was held in the office of the Ranbir the same day. Shrimati Shakuntala Seth, Chief Editor the Usha, presided. It was attended, among others, by Pandit Prem Nath Kannah, Mr. R.K. Kak, representative of the United Press of India, Pandit Vishwa Nath Kerni, Pandit Shambu Nath Kaul, Mr. Balraj Puri, Chaudhari Mohd Din, Editor the Al-Insan, Mr. Yaqin Ali Maskin, Editor the Kisan, Mr. Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din of the Khidmat, Bakshi Bodh Raj, Editor the Kashmir Mail, Mr. Om Prakash Saraf, Editor the Rattan, Raja Mohan Akbar Khan Editor the Sach Mirpur, and Pandit Bhag Mal, Joint Editor the Bharti. The question as to how best to probe the mind of the Prime Minister and how best to let him know the views of the State journalists regarding conduct of the affairs of the State, came in for thorough consideration at the meeting.

At the Press Conference next day the Prime Minister accompanied by the Chief Secretary Lala Haveli Ram and the State Publicity Officer Pandit Shankar Lal Kaul faced more than thirty newsmen. The session lasted for 100 minutes. Sir B.N. Rau addressing the newsmen said that he had thought it proper to meet the journalists collectively instead of individually. He stated that he had come to try to make Jammu and Kashmir a model State for which he needed co-operation of others, particularly the press which he considered to be a mighty power for achieving the good provided the pressmen realised their responsibilities. Asserting that he welcomed all healthy ciriticism he stated that he had been told that most newspapers indulged in attacks against the State officers. He, therefor, suggested that before publishing such criticism the editors should first make thorough enquiries and after satisfying themselves regarding the allegations in question should also personally approach the Publicity Officer for proper action in the matter. In the absence of any action on the part of the Government,

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the matter should be brought to his notice at the next press conference; thus alone the press could render real public service, the Prime Minister added.

There was a volley of questions put by the newsmen who had been rather taken aback by the Prime Minister's suggestion. As it was the first Press Conference addressed by Prime Minister, the Ranbir gave it full publicity and even published names of those journalists who had put questions to him. For this the Ranbir had to apologize for the departure from the long-held convention not to disclose the names of the questioning newsmen. It will interest many to know how the pressmen in the State had foild the attempt by the Prime Minister at his very first Press Conference to curb their legitimate activity which his suggestion really implied. Here are reproduced some of the important questions and answers high-lighting *inter alia* a few of the burning problems of the day.

Mulk Raj Saraf (Ranbir) : Journalists should not be bound down that before publication they should first refer complaints to the Publicity Officer. Once the editor is convinced that any allegations are *bona fide,* he should as a matter of necessity publish them. It is our right to do so. To assert our right we are prepared to take the risk. Whatever we have to say to the Government we say it through our papers. If the allegations turn out to be incorrect, the officers concerned can get them contradicted or any other step may be tkaen in the matter.

Prime Minister : Mine was a mere suggestion. I did not prescribe any law.

R.K. Kak (U.P.I.) A Srinagar newspaper published certain allegations against an officer. Its editor was arrested under the Defence Rules. He was handcuffed and paraded through main thoroughfare. Could not the proper action be taken according to the law? The editor could be sued for defamation. If you desire co-operation from the Press, the Government should also show due respect to the pressman.

Prime Minister : The matter is *sub-judice.*

Mulk Raj Saraf : Our complaint is against the procedure adopted by the Government; why the editor was handcuffed?

Prime Minister : I have noted it.

Girdhari Lal Anand (Firdaus) : At present whatever is published in the press against the Government officials, it is sent in the form of newspaper cuttings to the officials concerned for explanation. Do you envisage to stop this procedure?

Prime Minister : To forewarn is to forearm. Prior publication of allegations causes hinderance in the course of inquiry.

Raja Mohd Akbar Khan (Sach) : If we have got a grievance against an official, are we to send from there (Mirpur) a diary to the Publicity Officer.

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Prime Minister : You can write a letter to him.

Raja Mohd Akbar Khan : Would not our position be reduced to that of a C.I.D. man?

No reply.

Ramsaran Das Malhotra (Zindgi) : It is no occasion and use to interfere in the freedom of the press in the presence of laws at present in force in the State.

Prime Minister : My view is that by adopting the course I have suggested, the Government would be greatly helped. If it is very tedious or impracticable, I will not press it.

Girdhari Lal Anand : My personal experience is that the 'White List' of newspapers, whereby the newspapers have been divided by the Government into A, B and C classes, entirely cuts across the freedom of the press. It is unheard of anywhere else in the world. It should be at once scrapped.

Prime Minister : I have noted it.

Kaviraj Vaishno Gupt (Desh Sewak) : Whenever we ask the authorities to give reasons for removing the name of a paper from the White List, we are told that the matter is confidential.

Mulk Raj Saraf : An editor is also a man liable to commit mistakes. Let the editor against whom the Government intends to take any action, be first given an opportunity to explain what he has got to say in the matter. If his reply is found unsatisfactory, the matter should then be referred to a Press Advisory Board whose decision should be final.

No reply.

Ramsaran Das Malhotra : In my opinion all Government advertisements to newspapers should be stopped forthwith. This will enable the newspapers to tread the right path. It will also finish bogus newspapers and their guides. No distinction is observed here between a good paper and a bad paper. A newspaper may have a circulation of only ten or it may have a circulation of ten thousands, both are treated alike by the Government. Of what avail are such papers to the Government. If you stop the Government advertisements, the bad newspapes would die automatically and the good newspapers alone would survive and thrive.

No reply.

Kaviraj Vaishno Gupt : It has been published in some newspapers that before you came here, you met Mr. Jinnah.

Prime Minister : I have met Mr. Jinnah several times.

Kaviraj Vaishno Gupt : After your appointment as Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, have you discussed State politics with Mr. Jinnah?

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Prime Minister : No.

Chowdhari Mohd Shafie (Sudarshan) : The real demand of the people of the State is the establishment of a responsible Government under the aegis of the Maharaja Bahadur. What help you intend to render to the people in this connection?

Prime Minister : It is too big a question.

Om Prakash Saraf : The question is also being put to the biggest authority in the State. **No reply.**

Kumari Shanta (Bharti) : Would you also consider the plight of the women in the State?

Prime Minister : I have noted it.

Kumari Shakuntala (Usha) : Would you also meet a women's deputation?

Prime Minister : Yes, I have noted it.

Dinoo Bhai Pant (Gulab) : Would the Government notices, notifications and orders be published in future in Hindi also?

No Reply.

Abdul Majid Qureshi (Pasban) : You have stated that justice will be done to all. There are 78% Muslims in the State. But only one day after you took over as the Prime Minister, the Revenue Minister nominated 4 Muslims, 4 Hindus and 2 Sikhs as *Naib Tehsildars.*

No reply.

N.D. Nargis (Chand) : The Muslim League has given a prominent place to Kashmir in a map of proposed Pakistan. What do you think about it?

Prime Minister (after a little pause) : I do not want to say anything.

K.H. Khurshid who later became the so-called President of "Azad Kashmir" Government (Javed) : Despite their population being 78% in the State, the Muslims are not getting a fair deal. How do you intend to remove their grievances?

Prime Minister : Whatever would be done for the betterment of the State, the biggest majority inhabiting the State would poportionately be the biggest beneficiary.

Prime Minister Rau like his immediate predecessors did not remain in the saddle of premiership for long and during his short tenure of office Jammu and Kashmir State could make little headway much less become a model State which he had desired it to be. Reputedly a great constitutional Pundit, he was much occupied, even during the period he was Prime Minister in the State, with great changes that were in the process of being introduced in British India in those days. Once as a Chairman of the Hindu Law Committee, he was absent from the State for full 100 days. During this period Nawab Jafar Ali Khan, Development Minister,

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officiated as the Prime Minister. Mr. Rau's long absence from the State gave rise to presistent rumours that he was disinclined to come back. It was rather ridiculous to find that after Sir Gopalaswami Ayyangar every Prime Minister, howsoever otherwise eminently known or qualified, was finding it hard to stick to his job. The State, it was being openly said, was proving to be a graveyard for many a reputation. It was in this context that a patriotic urge compelled me to personally approach Maharaja Hari Singh to set the matters right so far as the quick succession of one Prime Minister after the other was concerned. I fully knew that the Maharaja could not be willing at all to grant responsible Government to the people of the State. The appointment of two popular Ministers chosen by the Praja Sabha as a sort of diarchy was considered by the Maharaja more than sufficient in the circumstances prevailing then. The Ranbir was, no doubt, a staunch supporter of responsible Government under the aegis of the Maharaja as was being strongly advocated by the National Conference. But the deadlock had to be got over. I felt there was need to do away with the 'import' of outside Prime Ministers who continued to come and go. Accordingly on January 18, 1945, which was the Basant day I sent the following telegram to the Maharaja who was then staying in Bombay :

"I as loyal subject and son of the soil claiming to know some public mind beseach Your Highness with folded hands to declare yourself Prime Minister as well in case Sir B.N. Rau does not come back as reported in Press. Today is Basant : end of one season. Let there also be end of repeated appointments of Prime Ministers from outside. Your Highness becoming Prime Minister for which precedents exist, can bring many boons to suffering people and vouchsafe speedy reforms in administration leading to responsible Government under your Highness's aegis."

The Maharaja did not accept my suggestion which proved to be a voice in the wilderness. He, however, appointed on June 29, 1945, a son of the soil, Pandit Ram Chandra Kak Minister-in-waiting to His Highness, to succeed Sir Rau as the Prime Minister.

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KAKISTOCRACY

What followed the installation of Mr. R.C. Kak as the Prime Minister is strictly speaking beyond the scope of this book. Suffice it to say that the Kak regime came to be known as Kakistocracy. The Ranbir also fell victim to it.

Mr. R.C. Kak had risen to the high position sheerly by dint of hard work and intelligent discharge of his duties. He was the first Government employee to occupy that position. His relations with the Editor of the Ranbir had been very friendly. In his appointment, the Ranbir naturally saw a dream being fulfilled inasmuch as a talented son of the soil had become the head of the administration. Even Sheikh Abdullah hailed the appointment of whom he described as the first Kashmiri-speaking Prime Minister of the State.

But as an irony of fate the cordial relations between Mr. Kak and the Ranbir were sooner than later manifestly under heavy pressure resulting from their different approaches towards the most delicate situation the State was confronted with on the eve of the partition.

In May 1946 Sheikh Abdullah had launched his famous 'Quit Kashmir' movement. This he did without consultation of the Congress High Command and in a manner that smacked of regionalism. For instance, in one of his public speeches he attacked the Maharaja for pursuing a policy which allowed grant of *jagirs* to some Jammu people in the Kashmir Valley without granting any *jagir* to even a single Kashmiri in the Jammu region. Such criticism of a Maharaja who was in no way an alien, considering the State as a whole, was not approved by the Ranbir as well as many top Congress leaders excluding, of course, Pandit Nehru.

Meanwhile Sheikh Abdullah had also been declared elected as the President of the all India States' Peoples' Conference in place of Pandit Nehru who was going to be elected the President of the Indian National Congress. On May 20, 1946, Sheikh Abdullah was arrested. Pandit Nehru wanted to defend him in the Court, but was stopped by the District Magistrate, Srinagar, Pandit Maharaj Kishen Dhar, at the Kohala bridge. In this characteristic style Pandit Nehru broke through the police cordon and reached Domel where he was detained in the Government Rest House. The Ranbir recorded its strong protest against the official handling of the situation at a moment when the country was engaged in a serious dialogue with the British Government regarding the transfer of power to the Indian people. Pandit Nehru, however, left the State following a call from the Congress High Command.

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The writing on the wall was clear to the Ranbir. India was going to be not only freed but also partitioned as a result of growing tension between the Congress and the Muslim League. Fortunately for Kashmir, her popular movement as spearheaded by Sheikh Abdullah had no love lost with the Muslim League and its leader Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah whose bid to personally woo the Kashmiri leaders had flopped earlier. But the tensions between the Maharaja and the Kashmiri leaders made the prospect of Kashmir, making its contribution towards the consolidation of the nationalist forces in the country, extremely difficult. The Ranbir could not but strongly stress the need for immediate release of Sheikh Abdullah who was undergoing 3 years' imprisonment in Bhaderwah jail following the Quit Kashmir movement which the Sheikh had later declared to be 'not against the person of the Ruler but against the autocratic regime'. Simultaneously the Ranbir demanded the accession of the State with the Indian Union. But prime Minister Kak had developed his own outlook and approach. With a personal friendship spread over almost 25 years he seemed to expect from the Editor of the Ranbir an active support to his view-point. On the other hand, I was honourbound to strenuously work in the direction which I, in all sincerity, felt to be right. Soon arose the important question of the Indian States joining the India's Constituent Assembly set up to frame the Constitution of free India. Several princely States chose to send their representatives to the Consembly. The Jammu and Kashmir Government, however, hesitated to take any timely action in the matter. The Ranbir bitterly criticised the vaccilating policy of the Government. In this connection the Ranbir which had become *daily*, since December 1, 1946, in its editorial of March 15, 1947, quoted a statement made by the then Prime Minister Gopalaswami Ayyangar on the floor of the Praja Sabha on April 4, 1942, when pressed by the members for information as to what the attitude of the Maharaja and the State Government was in relation to Sir Stafford Cripps' Mission that had arrived in Delhi from London in connection with constitutional changes in India. He had said :

> "Kashmir's attitude will be one of welcoming the formation only of a single Union for the whole of India (cheer) and the State will do its utmost to cooperate with the work of framing a constitution for it so that when the constitution is made, it may find itself able to accede to it. The Jammu and Kashmir State and the State's people will, I have no doubt, not look with favour on any tendency towards the formation of a multiple Union in the country and in consequent disruption of what is now and what should in future continue to be a United India."

The Ranbir in its issue of April 6, 1942, had described this speech as welcome addition of a magnificent chapter in the modern history of India.

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The Ranbir decried in forceful language such attempts as seemed afoot on the eve of national independence to keep Jammu and Kashmir aloof from India and characterised this move as a big conspiracy against the State. Such criticism greatly upset Mr. Kak. Once the Head of the Information Department told me with eyes almost wet that the Prime Minister had chided him more than once for his failure to win my favour. "Strave Mr. Saraf" into submission, Mr. Kak wrote ultimately on one of the files of the Information Department. Secret instructions had gone round not to send any advertisement to the Ranbir, nor even to subscribe the Rattan–the children's journal published by me, for any educational institution.

This was indeed little price to pay for the historical role which the Ranbir was destined to play in a most crucial hour of the nation's destiny. The Ranbir continued to emphasize its twin demand for the release of Sheikh Abdullah and the accession of the State of India. Every morning the demand was prominently front-paged in a panel. Mr. Kak had, however, found powerful allies in Jammu where the prominent Hindu leaders had been given the impression that the Maharaja after the lapse of the British Paramountcy would do well to steer clear of India and Pakistan and even expand his kingdom later on. It may appear incredible now but it is a part of history that while repeatedly voicing a course of action which it considered to be absolutely in the interest of every section of the population in the State, the Ranbir had to face considerable resistance from the Jammu Hindu leaders. Once the copies of the Ranbir were made a bonfire of by some angry Hindu youngmen in the public thoroughfare of Pacca Danga in Jammu town.

The matters with the Ranbir came to head when Acharya J.B. Kripalani, the then President of the Indian National Congress, visited Jammu on May 24, 1947, on a good-will mission. It was generally believed that his visit to the State was to study the situation on the spot and impress upon Maharaja the desirability of releasing National Conference leaders including Sheikh Abdullah.

Acharya Kripalani stayed in the State Guest House. I went to meet him. As I was talking with the distinguished leader, Mr. Kak suddenly entered the room and asked the Acharya to enquire from me about the present attitude of the Sheikh. Though somewhat taken aback I told the President of the Congress it would be possible for me to know the mind of Sheikh Abdullah if Mr. Kak permitted me to interview him in the Bhadarwah Jail. The matter ended there but Mr. Kak was apparently a bit nervous over his failure to secure a diplomatic hit, though a good diplomat he undoubtedly was.

Only four weeks after this incident, I was served with a notice by the District Magistrate, Jammu, on June 23, 1947, reading :

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"I, Chet Ram Chopra, District Magistrate, Jammu Province, Jammu, hereby direct for the purpose of securing public safety and maintenance of public order and in exercise of the powers conferred on me by rule 35 of the Jammu and Kashmir Defence Rules, as continued in force by section 2 of the Emergency Provisions (Continuance Ordinance No. III of 2003) read with Notification No. B-437/45 P. B. forming annexure to Council Order No. 750-C of 1945 dated 6th August, 1945, that you shall not print or publish till further orders any copy of the newspaper, the daily Ranbir from the date of this order.

Given under my hand and seal of the Court this day the 9th of Har, 2004."

As if this alone was not sufficient to crush me, another order, reproduced below, was simultaneously served on me. It read :

"I, Chet Ram Chopra, District Magistrate, Jammu hereby direct for the purpose of securing public safety and maintenance of public order and in exercise of the powers conferred upon me by rule 35 of the Jammu and Kashmir Defence Rules as continued in force by Section 2 of the Emergency Provisions (Continuance Ordinance No. III of 2003) read with Notification No. B-437/45 P.B. forming annexure to Council Order No. 750-C of 1945 dated 6th August, 1945, that you shall not till further orders make use of the printing press named Prem Printing Press for the printing of any newspaper from the date of this order.

Given under my hand and seal of the Court this day the 9th of Har, 2004."

There was obviously no previous warning, nor any security demand. No grounds whatever for the action taken were set forth in the arbitrary orders. Scores of people were working in the offices of the Ranbir and its Printing Press. With one stroke of pen all of them were thrown out of job for no fault of theirs. What more than this could there be indeed to "starve Mr. Saraf?"

On the day the orders were given, I was in Srinagar. The orders in Jammu were served on the Assistant Editor of the Ranbir–Om Prakash Saraf–at 9 in the night. Earlier in the morning the Additional District Magistrate had summoned him in his office and told him that as it would take some time to go through certain formalities in preparing the orders, the Ranbir should not be published on that day. To this the Assistant Editor had spiritedly replied that it was not possible to postpone the publication of the paper on verbal orders. Perhaps the authorities were yet awaiting full instructions from the Government in Srinagar.

On being informed on the telephone of the whole affair I immediately issued the following press statement from Srinagar :

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"In view of the efforts that were being made in diverse ways to put pressure on the Ranbir during the past some months and the way the Ranbir was resisting those tactics, the prohibitory orders regarding the Ranbir and its Printing Press were not unexpected. Such orders cannot subdue my spirit nor undermine my determination. The efforts for the accession of the Jammu and Kashmir State to India as well as the release of Sheikh Abdullah and other National leaders which were being strenuously made by the Ranbir in the interest of the real and everlasting benefit of the State and its Ruler, would continue unabated."

The national press as well as the entire local press stood aghast. Even the pro-Pakistan newspapers like the Inqilab, Lahore, took the Government to task for its 'inhuman step'.

The conscience of the Government was perhaps also pricked. A spokesman of the Government suggested to me to express regrets to the Government and get the prohibitory orders rescinded. Another VIP approached me to ask for an undertaking for good behaviour in the future and every thing would be all right. I also received hints to put in representation asking in plain words for the resuscitation of both the Ranbir and the Printing Press and this would surely be done. I listened to all these things and kept mum as I had no doubt in my mind that the Maharaja himself, if he did not get rid of his lot of advisers, was bound to come to grief. While a good deal of harm had already been done, Mahatma Gandhi paid a visit to the Maharaja in Srinagar in July 1947. This paved the way for Mr. Kak's exit who was soon to lose his job and much more. On August 10, Mr. Kak was succeeded by Major General Thakur Janak Singh–a retired Revenue Minister. Most people heaved a sigh of relief. A deliverance day was celebrated by the National Conference.

On August 26, 1947, I received the following order from the District Magistrate, Jammu:

"I hereby withdraw my order dated the 9th Har, 2004 prohibiting you from printing and publishing the daily Ranbir." A similar order removing the ban on my Printing Press was also issued.

The stand of the Ranbir was vindicated but, alas, the State had lost a golden opportunity to accede to the Indian Union in time.

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ACCESSION TO INDIA

The Ranbir stood gagged at that fateful hour when India was happily freed but tragically partitioned. The Jammu and Kashmir Government on its part had failed to take a timely decision about its future affiliation. The controversy whether Mr. Kak himself favoured an independent State of Jammu and Kashmir or he simply carried the behests of the Ruler in suppressing the pro-India forces of the day, may, perhaps, be never resolved. But it is clear that the powers-that-be did favour a non-aligned status at a time when the futility of such an unrearlistic policy could hardly be more obvious. Confronted with distressing circumstances emerging from its own prolonged apathy towards fast moving political scene, the State Government was left with no other choice but to offer to enter into stand-still agreements with both India and Pakistan.

A Government Press Note issued on August, 12, 1947, stated:

"The Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir has wired to the States' Relations Departments of India and Pakistan to say that the Jammu and Kashmir Government would 'welcome stand–still agreements with them on all matters on whcih these exist at present moment with the outgoing British Indian Government.' It has been suggested that existing arrangements should continue pending settlement of details and formal execution of fresh agreements."

Another press note issued on the same day said.

"His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur has been pleased to order that the 15th, the 16th and the 17th August, 1947 be observed public holidays throughout the State and the towns of Jammu, Srinagar, Gilgit and Leh illuminated on the 15th to celebrate the establishment of Dominions of the Union of India and Pakistan and retrocession of Paramountcy."

The Ranbir re-emerged on September 10, 1947, when the all important question of the State's relationship with India was still pending solution. The Amrita Bazar Patrika had reported an interview with the Maharaja asserting that he could sign a decree for the union of the State with Pakistan with his life blood only. Nevertheless, he carried on parleys with the Simla Hills chiefs and other princes presumably to carve out an extended independent kingdom for himself. He was also believed to be constantly in contact with Delhi, London and Karachi to keep himself adequately informed about their reactions to his move. Meanwhile Pakistan had

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accepted the offer by Jammu and Kashmir of the stand still agreement but India true to its declared policy of thrashing out matters with the popular leaders of the various States rather than their hereditary rulers, made explicit its reluctance to enter into any such agreement. The Ranbir vigorously resumed its campaign for the release of Sheikh Abdullah and the State's accession to India. Paradoxically speaking nothing strengthened the hands of the pro-India forces in the State more than the crude tactics adopted by the unscrupulous rulers of the newly-born State of Pakistan. The stand-still agreement with them soon proved of an illusory nature. Quite against the provisions of the stand-still agreement, Pakistan withheld all essential supplies like salt, sugar, petrol, cloth to the State. Pakistan's real aim in doing so was to starve the population and thus coerce the State to join it. Pakistan also restored to various other inhuman methods to achieve its objective. It excited locals in Poonch to rebel against the authority of the Maharaja. Finally, it engineered a full scale tribal invasion of the State. All this set the Maharaja athinking. The popular leaders of the State including even those Hindus who earlier appeared to favour independence now cried for early release of Sheikh Abdullah and accession to India. Due to prevailing uncertainty, general situation in the State was fast deteriorating.

The Maharaja could resist no more. Sheikh Abdullah who had been earlier brought from Bhadarwah to Badami Bagh, Srinagar, was ordered to be released on September 29, 1947. Gradually all other imprisoned leaders were also set free. Sheikh Abdullah in his first public utterance after his release declared at Hazuri Bagh, Srinagar, on October 1, 1947, that "till the last drop of my blood, I will not believe in the two-nation theory or formation of the States on the basis of religion." He also stated at the same meeting that first of all he wanted to have full responsible Government in the State which could then choose between India and Pakistan. He, however, more than once showed his inclination towards what he called India of Gandhi and Nehru.

In the meantime ended the interregnum of Prime Minister Major General Thakur Janak Singh who was permitted by the Maharaja on October 15, 1947, "to relinquish the post of Prime Minister at his own request for reasons of health". Mr. Justice Mehr Chand Mahajan took over as Prime Minister the same day. The same evening he held a Press conference at which he declared that he wanted to make Kashmir a Switzerland of Asia. Mr. Mahajan stated:

> "I am assuming the charge of the office of Prime Minister at a moment when the State is on the chess-board of power politics. I am here in a spirit of loyal service to the ruler and his people. I am optimistic enough to say that in the dominions of His Highness the East and West Punjab will once again meet as friends and I come with an

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open mind and have no rigid political creed or theories. I am satisfied that constructive work for one's country irrespective of ideologies is what is needed most at the present moment. I do believe that the Government of His Highness must be so run that it takes its decisions with the co-operation and the consent of the people's representatives and is ultimately responsible not only to His Highness but also to his people."

The great merit of Mr. Mahajan lay in the fact that besides being an eminent Judge of men and matters, and endowed with a congenial temper and a progressive mind, he enjoyed full confidence of both the Maharaja and the Government of India. Personally speaking my relations with Mr. Mahajan were as they continue to be, most cordial. I had succeeded him as the President of the All India Mahajan Conference held in Shakargarh in 1931. In 1942 when he again presided at the annual deliberations of the All India Mahajan conference held in Jammu, I was the chairman of the Reception Committee. Incidentally it may be recalled that Sheikh Abdullah sent me from Srinagar his warmest congratulations on adopting a resolution at the Jammu Session of the Mahajan Conference in connection with the liquidation of rural indebtedness.

Before actually assuming charge of the office of Prime Minister, Mr. Mahajan had a few meetings with Sheikh Abdullah in Srinagar. These talks generally centred round the question as to how far the National Conference was prepared to cooperate in the task of governance of the State. The day Mr. Mahajan took over Sheikh Abdullah left for New Delhi for talks with Pandit Nehru and also to take formal charge as President of the All-India States' Peoples' Conference. Probably at the instance of the Sheikh one of his trusted colleagues Pandit Jia Lal Kilam resumed the thread of talks with Mr. Mahajan. Pandit Kilam took me along with him to Mr Mahajan. I never enquired from late Pandit Kilam whether he was taking me with him to meet the Prime Minister of his own accord or he had been advised by Sheikh Abdullah to do so. We both had a few meetings with Mr. Mahajan on October 15 and 16, 1947. Our discussions were confined to two points: first, participation of National Conference in the State Council of Ministers and, secondly, the portfolios to be allotted to the National Conference Ministers.

Prime Minister Mahajan insisted that Sheikh Abdullah and Mirza Moh'd Afzal Beg should themselves join the State Cabinet. Pandit Kilam opined that in case the National Conference accepted office as a result of mutual understanding, its nominees should necessarily get Home and Finance portfolios. Mr. Mahajan invited me to tea alone in the evening of October 16, 1947. We had a long talk discussing various facets of the question before us. The next morning

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I met Mr. Kilam. As a result of my conversation with him, Pandit Kilam on the following morning addressed a note to the Prime Minister in which he said :

"I had a talk with Mr. Saraf, and gathered an impression that my submissions require some further elucidation. May I, therefore, request you to kindly make it possible to permit me to meet you at any time convenient to your goodself *to-day*."

The world to-day as under-lined by Mr. Kilam significantly marked the urgency of the occasion. But, things were moving too fast mainly due to the growing intransigence and the daily increasing aggressive activities of Pakistan on the border areas of the state. Mr. Mahajan had to immediately undertake a tour of these areas, first in the valley and then in Jammu. So he hurriedly wrote back in his own hand on Mr. Kilam's note and handed it over to me : "I think we will meet next week. I am going out of Srinagar."

On October 23, 1947, the armed tribesmen from Pakistan crossed into Kashmir through Muzaffarabad. They were soon on their way to Srinagar. At Garhi, the Chief on the Dogra Army, Brigadier Rajindra Singh had to lay down his life to stop advance of the marauders. On the night of October 24, the Dussehra Day, Srinagar City was plunged into darkness as the power-house at Mahoora had been badly damaged by the raiders. The same day Mr. Ram Lal Batra who was the Deputy Prime Minister, left Srinagar for New Delhi with a formal letter of accession of the State to India, from Maharaja Hari Singh, along with a personal letter to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, and another to Sardar Patel, the Union Home Minister asking for military aid to save the State from Pakistan's uprovoked aggression. Sheikh Abdullah also flew to Delhi on October 25, 1947.

Meanwhile, disquietening news continued to pour in Srinagar from Poonch and Baramulla sides. Advance of the raiders to the City of Srinagar had to be stopped at any cost. At this critical junction Mr. V.P. Menon, Secretary of the Union Ministry of States, flew from Delhi to Srinagar on October 25, He had hurried discussions first with the Prime Minister Mahajan and then with the Maharaja. It was decided that the Maharaja should go to Jammu to be easily available, if situation so demanded for personal negotiations with India and that Mr. Mahajan should immediately accompany Mr. Menon to Delhi by air.

How the Government of India took decision to give military aid to the Maharaja to drive out the armed tribesmen has been vividly described by Mr. Mahajan in his book "Looking Back":

"Next morning (October 26) Mr. V.P. Menon and I flew to Delhi. We arrived at Safdarjung airport at about 8 A.M. where a car was waiting. I immediately drove to the Prime Minister's House on York Road. The Prime Minister and Sardar Patel both were

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there and were apprised of the situation that had arisen. In view of the advance of the raiders towards the towns of Baramula and Srinagar, I requested immediate military aid on any terms. I said somewhat emphatically that the town of Srinagar must be saved at any cost from loot and destruction. During the talk, the Prime Minister said that even if the town was taken by the tribesmen, India was strong enough to re-take it. Its recapture, however, could not have undone the damage that would have resulted. I, therefore, firmly but respectfully insisted on the acceptance of my request for immediate military aid. The Prime Minister observed that it was not easy on the spur of the moment to send troops as such an operation required considerable preparation and arrangement, and troops could not be moved without due deliberation merely on my demand. I was, however, adamant in my submission; the Prime Minister also was sticking to his own view. As a last resort I said, "Give us the military force we need. Take the accession and give whatever power you desire to the popular party. The army must fly to save Srinagar this evening or else I will go to Lahore and negotiate terms with Mr. Jinnah."

"When I told the Prime Minister of India that I had orders to go to Pakistan in case immediate military aid was not given, he naturally became upset and in angry tone said, 'Mahajan go away." I got up and was about to leave the room when Sardar Patel detained me by saying in my ear, "Of course, Mahajan, you are not going to Pakistan." Just then, a piece of paper was passed over to the Prime Minister. He read it and in a loud voice said, "Sheikh Sahib also says the same thing." It appeared that Sheikh Abdulla had been listening to all this talk while sitting in one of the bedrooms adjoining the drawing room where we were. He now strengthened my hands by telling the Prime Minister that Military help must be sent immediately. This came as a timely help for the success of my mission to New Delhi. The Prime Minister's attitude changed on reading this slip. After a few minutes talk, he told me to go and have some rest at Sardar Baldev Singh's house. He was calling a meeting of the Defence Council at 10 A.M. to discuss the matter and promised to convey its decision to me through my host, Sardar Baldev Singh (The Defence Minister), before lunch.

"I left the Prime Minister's house and went to the house of Sardar Baldev Singh. After a shave and a bath I reured for some much needed rest. During the previous three days I had neither time for sleep nor rest. At 12.45 p.m. Sardar Baldev Singh came and told me that a decision had been taken to send two companies of Indian troops to Srinagar. All the planes in India had been requisitioned for the purpose. He also wanted me to give the commander of this force as much information as I could about the situation in the State. Luckily I had

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brought with me a plan which showed where the clash between the raiders and the State forces had occurred, the deployment of the raiders and distribution of the State forces.

"The Cabinet meeting in the evening affirmed the decision of the Defence Council to give military aid to the Maharaja to drive out the tribesmen. Around dinner time, the Prime Minister sent a message to me that with Mr. V.P. Menon I should fly to Jammu to inform the Maharaja of this decision and also to get his signature on certain supplementary documents about the accession. I frankly informed him that I was not prepared to go to Jammu till I got news from my aerodrome officer at Srinagar that the Indian forces had landed there. Panditji did not insist and said, "You can fly to Jammu next morning."

"In the early hours of the morning of the 27th, I could hear the noise of the planes flying over Sardar Baldev Singh's house and carrying the military personnel to Srinagar. At about 9 A.M. I got a message from the aerodrome officer of Srinagar that troops had landed there and had gone into action. On receipt of this message, I flew to Jammu with Mr. V.P. Menon. As we landed at Jammu, the Brigadier of the State forces met me. He felt considerably relieved by the arrival of the Indian army in Srinagar. He told me that the troops on landing in Srinagar had gone into battle with the tribesmen. Mr. Menon and myself met His Highness at the palace. His Highness had seen Indian planes carrying the troops flying over the palace and the town. This had created some confidence in his mind. After some discussion, formal documents were signed which Mr. Menon took back to New Delhi."

Sheikh Abdullah also returned to Srinagar after military operations by the Indian army had started.

On November 2, 1947, the Sheikh was duly sworn in as the Head of the Emergency Administration. He took all the prominent members of the National Conference in the Administration. To maintain public relations closely between the State Government and Government of India, Bakshi Tek Chand ex-Chief Justic Punjab High Court, was nominated as the representative of Jammu and Kashmir State in New Delhi and Kanwar Daleep Singh India's Agent in Jammu and Kashmir State.

The Ranbir, of course, haild the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India as well as the association of Sheikh Abdullah and his top colleagues with the Government although the delay in effecting a change of such far-reaching significance had obviously left much to be desired. The State was fully experiencing the horrors of a full-scale war.

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SILVER JUBILEE

On June 24, 1949, the Ranbir completed its twenty-fifth year when India was no longer in bondage. The national leaders though deprived of the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi who was shot dead by a fanatic Hindu on January 30, 1948, were striving hard to frame a constitution of free India. Jammu and Kashmir had acceded to India but an uneasy Indo-Pak cease-fire prevailed which still continues. The popular Government in the State had been installed but Maharaja Hari Singh after handing over the power to his talented son Yuvraj (now Maharaja) Karan Singh had left for Bombay for good. The revolutionary measures being introduced by the National Conference Government had enraged the feudal, reactionary and communal elements in the State. Also at the helm of affairs had emerged several adventurists and unscrupulous people devoid of competence and capacity as fit instruments of a social change. The occasion hardly provided a happy spectacle to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the Ranbir with much festivity. It, however, issued an 118-page special issue *inter alia* containing many messages of good wishes from all over the country. Some of these may be read with interest here indicating what a great institution the Ranbir had been able to develop into during the 25 years of its life :

His Excellency Shri C. Rajagopalachari, Governor General of India : "The biggest single influence that today moulds the progress and character of a people is the newspaper. May the Ranbir continue its good work for many more years to come."

Dr. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, President, Indian National Congress : "That your paper should have struggled and survived a quarter of century with all its vicissitudes, is not a small matter. I congratulate you on your successful career and that it will lead to a still greater success."

Sheikh Moh'd Abdullah, Prime Minister, Jammu and Kashmir State : I feel happy to send my felicitations to Lala Mulk Raj Saraf, veteran journalist and the founder-editor of the first newspaper published in this State. The Ranbir has been leader of thought in many matters and I testify that many dreams it has dreamt have come true."

Shri N. Gopalswami Ayyangar, Minister for Transport and Railways, Government of India : "I remember reading the Ranbir regularly when I was in Kashmir (As Prime Minister). Its outlook was progressive throughout and, while it gave expression to fairly strong

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criticism, it was not afraid of supporting those in authority when it felt that they were in the right."

Shri B.N. Rau, India's Permanent Representative with the United Nations, Lake Success U.S.A. : "Much has happened in Jammu and Kashmir since I left the State but I hope that the Ranbir is still flourishing and that it will continue to flourish in the years to come".

Shri Devadas Gandhi, President All India Newspaper Editors' Conference : "I congratulate the Ranbir, the well-known nationalist daily, published in Kashmir on its having completed 25 years of useful service."

Dr. Siddheshwar Varma, Editor, the Great English Indian Dictionary and ex-President the Linguistic Society of India : "When generations hence the history of Jammu and Kashmir will be written, the Ranbir will certainly be characterized as one of the makers of Jammu and Kashmir. It has been said that men make history, but ideas make men. One of the fountain heads of history making ideas in the State has been the stimulating journal Ranbir."

Pandit Sham Lal Saraf, Health and Local Self Government Minister Jammu and Kashmir : To have run the paper successfully for twentyfive long years and to have consistently held and espoused views of progressive character was not the task of man of ordinary calibre."

Sardar Budh Singh, Minister for Information, Broadcasting, Law and Constitution, Jammu and Kashmir : "It was no ordinary task of its Editor, Lala Mulk Raj Saraf, that the Ranbir inspite of great hardships and opposition, voiced forth the feelings of the oppressed and depressed people of the State."

Colonel Pir Mohd. Khan, Education Minister, Jammu and Kashmir : "The Ranbir from its very inception has been advocating the popular cause of liberty, peace and progress and has fought for its success. It has always been its unfailing endeavour to strengthen the bonds of friendship between Kashmir and India so that through harmonious understanding and unity of efforts they may serve the common good of mankind."

Shri Rana Jung Bahadur Singh, Editor the National Call and the Nav Bharat and an ex-Editor the Tribune and the Time of India : "Mr. Saraf is one of those veteran journalists who have placed their talents as an offering at the altar of the goddess of liberty. The Ranbir has fought many a battle on behalf of democracy in Jammu and Kashmir and has today after its twentyfive years of heroic efforts the joy of witnessing the speedy crystallization of its dreams. If its Silver Jubilee is really silver, let its Golden Jubilee be truly golden."

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Shri Tushar Kanti Ghosh, Editor the Amrit Bazar Patrika : "May the Ranbir continue to help in the noble mission of creation of an ideal secular State in beautiful Kashmir within the Indain Union."

Shri Janki Nath Wazir, Chief Justice of Jammu and Kashmir High Court of Judicature : "The Ranbir has had a brilliant and glorious career. It has grown from strength to strength during these 25 years of life and looks forward to an even more successful career in the future. It has been expressing the mind of the public without fear or favour and has always avoided writing on communal subjects which might offend feelings of one community or the other. The paper has strived hard to bring about communal harmony between different sects of people in this country."

Shri Dwarka Nath Kachru, Private Secretary to the Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru : "Twentyfive years ago when the Ranbir was first started, there was hardly any paper worth the name in any of the Indian States. The Ranbir had a humble beginning but as time went on its made progress and assumed responsible position in the public life of the State."

Mr. G.A. Ashai, a prominent Kashmiri intellectual : "I have keenly watched the progress of this paper and I know how, amidst the difficulties and adverse conditions through which our State has had to pass, the Ranbir continued unstintedly to give support to the progressive voice of the people."

Pandit Radha Krishan Kak, journalist, Srinagar : "The story of the foundation and progress of the Ranbir is in itself a glorious chapter in the history of journalism in Jammu and Kashmir. The steadfastness, uprightness and fearlessness with which Lala Mulk Raj Saraf served the cause of the country through the Ranbir have set up a very high standard of journalism in the State."

Pandit Lok Nath Sharma, ex-Advocate General, Jammu and Kashmir : "The policy of the Ranbir in upholding the rights of the people even in adverse circumstances gives credit to Mr. Saraf of which any front-rank journalist may well feel proud."

Major-General Dewan Bishan Dass, retired Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir : "I well remember the time when Lala Mulk Raj Saraf was making efforts to bring about the first newspaper of the State. It was no easy task. Shri Saraf, however, by dint of his determination and ability made impossible the possible. He has set an excellent record worthy of emulation by his selfless service to the country in general and the people of the State in particular. I used to read the Ranbir regularly so long as my eye-sight worked. Still I am getting the paper read out to me regularly.

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Justice Kishan Lal Kitchlu, a former President of the State Legislative Assembly: "The liberal, non-communal and national outlook of the Ranbir has earned for it great popularity. Mr. Mulk Raj Saraf should indeed feel happy that the several constitutional and other reforms as advocated by the Ranbir have now assumed a practical shape."

Sardar Dewan Singh Maftoon, Editor the Rayasat Delhi : "It is no easy task to bring out a successful newspaper from any princely State but Mulk Raj Saraf has creditably led the way to journalism in the Indian States."

Pandit Baldev Prasad Sharma, Journalist : "I feel proud that I learned A.B.C. of journalism at the feet of Lala Mulk Raj Saraf. I was a student of Shri Pratap High School, Srinagar, when in 1927 I began to send news stories for publication in the Ranbir. I was particularly instructed by Lala ji to keep a copy of all that I sent to the Ranbir and then compare it with what appeared in the paper. I was at first disappointed because I found my despatches so much 'mutilated' but later on I realised its value and gained tremendously thereby. During 25 years' existence of the Ranbir the conditions in Jammu and Kashmir have considerably changed. In this the Ranbir and its editor have played a conspicuous part and they can rightly feel proud of their achievements. Journalism in the State has indeed greatly advanced under the guidance of the Ranbir."

Dr. S.S. Nishat, Kashmir Trade Agent in Bombay : "I began my career with the Ranbir. The Ranbir has brought forth in lime-light many big and small personalities, I myself being the smallest among them. I met Sheikh Abdullah and other State leaders for the first time in the office of the Ranbir. The foundation of the Jammu National Conference was also laid in this office. Due to his far-sightedness and uprightness Lala Mulk Raj Saraf has had always deep vision of the future."

Shri Prem Nath Pardesi, noted story-writer : "As a school-boy I used to read the Ranbir with much interest. Then I began to write for it. When for the first time, my name appeared in the paper, I felt overjoyed as if I had become a great man and that I had the power to politically change the whole world. Soon after, I composed some poems which Shri Mulk Raj Saraf published in his paper after suitable corrections. This greatly encouraged me. In fact I owe my literary career to the Ranbir."

Pandit Ganga Nath Sharma, a former Joint Editor of the Ranbir : "It would be no exaggeration to say that the seed of democracy that we see thriving in the State today was implanted and nourished with full caress and determination by the Ranbir in the course of last 25 years in face of great hardships and adverse conditions. The dream of yesterday as dreamt by the Ranbir, has become a reality to-day. What aspect of life is there for the

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improvement and progress of which the Ranbir has not made the right use of its forceful pen and reasoning? For rendering this selfless service Lala Mulk Raj Saraf took up the journalistic enterprise at a time when there appeared hardly any chance for its success. There were the collousness of the officialdom, the opposition of the reactionaries and the vested interests, the lack of interest in newspaper reading by the people, the non-existence of any source of collecting and sending news, the shortage of writers and correspondents. These were enough to unnerve the determination of any experienced editor of a newspaper, but Lala Mulk Raj Saraf bravely faced all this and came out with flying colours in the field of journalism.

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PARTING OF WAYS

Sheikh Abdullah had not an easy start. In the very nature of the circumstances in which the power was transferred to him, the fissures were bound to occur sooner than later, on the one hand, between him and those in authority who had never seen eye to eye with him and, on the other hand, within his own camp between him and those like him who had neither the experience nor the patience to deal with an admittedly nerve-breaking situation that had arisen as a result of the wanton Pakistani aggression.

The Sheikh was appointed by the Maharaja as the Head of the Emergency Administration on November 2, 1947. This brought into being, as the Ranbir put it, two rival administrations in the State—Sheikh Abdullah enjoying popular support with best wishes of the Nehru Government in Delhi and Mr. Mehr Chand Mahajan who continued to be the Prime Minister 'with their respective spheres of powers and positions totally vague, undefined and unclarified'. The Sheikh was sometimes called the Head of the Emergency Administration and sometimes the Chief Minister. Similarly, Mr. Mahajan was described as the Prime Minister as well as the Dewan.

Once I told Mr. Mahajan that with the appointment of the Sheikh, his own fate as the Prime Minister had been sealed. He brushed aside my idea little realising that I knew the Sheikh better than he did. The Sheikh began to do whatever he wanted in the name of emergency not unoften without even informing the Maharaja, much less the Prime Minister. The confusion continued till the Sheikh whose star was in ascendency, was formally installed as the Prime Minister on March 17 1948, when the Maharaja in deference to the wishes of the Government of India announced the establishment of full-fledged responsible Government in the State presumably with the immediate view to strengthening the hands of India in the Security Council. Mr. Mahajan left the State after terminating the agreement of service which allowed him handsome compensation for the unexpired period of his five years' term but which he did not claim. A little longer, the Maharaja himself had to leave the State after Yuvraj (now Maharaja) Karan Singh in his late teens, was made the regent.

So far so good. Sheikh Abdullah as the most popular leader of the State especially at that critical juncture of the history while stoutly defending the cherished ideals of secular democracy and radical social change, indeed deserved and amply received the whole-hearted support of all well-wishers of the country. For the Ranbir, it was truly the realisation of a long dreamt

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dream in the shape of the popular government in the State. It threw open its columns to publicity aiming at the stabilization of the regime which was being constantly attacked not only by the standard-bearers of theocracy across the border but also by the reactionary elements within the State itself. The Ranbir did much more. Its Assistant Editor, Om Prakash Saraf, offered his wholetime services and worked in an honorary capacity as the Emergency Publicity Officer. And how hard he worked would be evident from what the Deputy Head of the Emergency Administration, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, noted on January 2, 1948 :

> "I am glad to bring on record my deep appreciation of the voluntary and honorary services of Mr. O.P. Saraf as Emergency Publicity Officer in absence of any official machinery pertaining to propaganda and publicity work in Jammu. His ability in immediately organising the office and efficiently carrying out the multifarious responsibilities entrusted to him in very abnormal times has greatly impressed me."

The Ranbir later assailed the agitation launched by the Praja Parishad (now Jan Sangh) for merger of the State with the Union as ill-conceived and strongly opposed it. It is interesting to recall that the Praja Parishad's first character of demands *inter alia* urged the imposition of a ban on the publication of the Ranbir. In fact, the Praja Parishad leadership consisted of the same old people who had earlier never approved of the policy of the Ranbir favouring the State's immediate accession with India. Since, however, it had now become a fait *accomplie*, with their privileges fast disappearing, they raised the demand for a complete merger with the Indian Union motivated basically by a desire to wash off their old sin as also to embarrass the Kashmir leaders without sharing their responsibility in any way to strengthen the willing association of the Muslims in the valley with the rest of the country.

The Pakistan press in those days when all means of communication ware completely cut off between the two parts of the State that had come to be divided by a cease-fire line under United Nations' observance, would occasionally exploit the good name of the Ranbir presumably to hoodwink its innumerable admirers there (*). For instance, the Dawn of Karachi published in its issue of May 11, 1949, a news-item circulated by the Associated Press of Pakistan from Abbotabad attributing to the Ranbir an article from the pen of 'a writer, a professor in local college' saying "Kashmiris whether Hindus or Muslims are deadly against the Abdullah cabinet

(*) Many years later in May 1964 my eldest son, Om happened to visit Rawalpindi. Choudhary Ghulam Abbas, the top leader of Pak-occupied Kashmir sorrowfully told him that he had to leave his home town Jammu because there were not "a few more persons like you in Jammu.

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and are solidly behind the Muslim Conference's demand for accession of the State to Pakistan". I was in New Delhi where this canard came to my notice on May 12, 1949. I immediately issued a press statement from Delhi saying :

> "This is a complete fabrication and a white lie characteristic of the Dawn-like Pakistani Press. It is most shocking, particularly because the news-item is stated to have emanated from a premier news agency of Pakistan. The Ranbir can never give place in its columns to such a baseless, false and irresponsible statement. The Ranbir has consistently championed the cause of nationalism from its very inception and as such has always given its full and willing cooperation to the Administration headed by Sheikh Abdullah."

When the Ranbir celebrated its Silver Jubilee on June 24, 1949, Sheikh Abdullah was good enough to acknowledge its services in a long message. But this was actually a feeble cover for the strains and stresses that had begun to raise their ugly head in the relationship between the Head of the Government and the Editor of the premier newspaper of the State after almost 20 years of mutual good-will. I am still appreciative of his many qualities of head and heart. But as a dispassionate newspaperman I had to judge the Sheikh in his new role as an administrator. His weakness lay in the fact that he would take rational view of things only when it fitted in with his egoistic inclinations. Though he did introduce quite a few reforms of far-reaching significance, their working left much to be desired with the rsult that the Ranbir had to be critical at times. This extremely annoyed him.

At one time I told Sheikh Abdullah in his office in Srinagar "Sheikh Sahib, you are always rightly claiming that you have rid the people of Maharaja Hari Singh. But would you believe you have imposed on them more than one Maharaja". Enraged over this he burst out:

> "I am already receiving reports about your changed attitude towards us. I would not any longer listen to you much less act upon your advice. If you persist in your present behaviour, I am afraid, I shall have to send you to the Central Jail (pointing his finger towards the Hari Parbat fort)".

When I wrote to Om in Jammu as to what had transpired between the Prime Minister and myself, pat came the reply from him :

> Yet might have also told the Sheikh that you have not been enjoying such a life as if put in jail, you would have to suffer much".

The Sheikh had permitted himself to be surrounded by a set of sychophants who were always busy in poisoning his ears to grind their own axe. They were afraid of the Ranbir and would, therefore, leave no stone unturned to wean the Sheikh away from the Ranbir. Once

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I had an occasion to talk over things in Jammu and Kashmir with a high officer of the Indian Foreign Service in Delhi. He soon reported this conversation to one of the advisers of the Sheikh, who on my return to Jammu told me :

"You take advantage of your being the premier journalist in the State and malign the men-in-power here."

I said in reply : "I am not habituated like you to say one thing to one man and another thing to another man or say something by mouth and write something else on paper. If I have told my Delhi friend something against our Prime Minister, I must have previously said the same thing in the face of the Prime Minister, himself or published the same in my paper. Have you not observed similar criticism in my paper? My views are not hidden from any body. As for my being a premier journalist in the State, you cannot undo history howsoever you may desire to do it."

To stifle the voice of the Ranbir, Sheikh Abdullah's advisers began to adopt tactics whch were more reprehensible than even those adopted by an autocratic regime in the past. They misused secret funds and financed publication of newspapers whose copies would be distributed among the people free of charge. The Government advertisements were withheld. Even some private advertisers were persuaded to terminate connections with the Ranbir. It would not be even subscribed by any school or other official or semi-official agency. Those who privately subscribed to the Ranbir were regarded as political untouchables. Om, who had by then become active in the political field, was ousted from the National Conference. And, attempts were made to purchase the die-hard reactionaries including the communalists who had every reasons to be angry with the progressive policies pursued by the Ranbir. The Ranbir, thus, found itself by an intriguing combination of circumstances, between the devil and the deep sea. Of course, the past of the Ranbir could not be obliterated nor the spirit of the Ranbir which manifested itself for such a long time in bringing about much needed reforms in various spheres of public life, could bend. The Ranbir, I strongly felt, had done its duty by the people. Better to stop it now and here, and keep its glorious past alive rather than compromise. I had to spend many a sleepless night to ponder over the closure of the Ranbir just as I had to work day and night to bring it into being.

On May 18, 1950, the Ranbir chose to disappear. On that day the announcement of closure reproduced below took its readers by surprise : "With heavy heart it is announced that due to various reasons which need not be mentioned at present, further publication of the Ranbir cannot be continued. I am, therefore, compelled to close the paper indefinitely."

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It was indeed an irony of fate that the Ranbir–the physical part of it–fell victim to a popular regime for whose establishment it had worked so hard and long and that too during the time of a leader who, though only a college student when the Ranbir came into being, had grown in the years to come, with a good deal of mutual understanding with the Ranbir. It was no consolation a few years later to find the 'victor' himself falling victim to his thoughtlessness.

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AS A NEWSMAN

With the disappearance of the Ranbir I ceased to be an editor but not a journalist. Henceforward my role was confined to being a newsman–a reporter on behalf of several prominent newspapers in the country. I had my early training as a reporter with the "Bande Matram" in 1920. The reminisceness of proceedings at the Town Hall, Lahore, of the Hunter Commission which the British Government had setup to enquire into Jallianwalla Bagh massacre still thrill my heart. I vividly remember how Shri Jagat Narain, an eminent Judge of the Allahabad High Court, who was a member of the Commission, would pounce upon General Dyre to know aobut details of the tragedy.

As the Editor of the Ranbir I had literally to create reporters all over the State. All this helped me in the course of time to possess a proper understanding of the rights and responsibilities of a newsman. In the discharge of my obligations as a newsman in this strategic State I often encountered many a difficulty at the hands of those who had little respect for the sacredness of the facts.

It may be in the fitness of things to mention here that leading news concerns in the country invariably took the initiative in asking for my services as their correspondent in the State. Mr. P. Dutt, Editor-in-chief, the Free Press of India. (later United Press of India) wrote to me on September 23, 1928 : "On the suggestion of one of our friends I am glad to write to you requesting you to work for us as our corrspondent" I accepted the job. Three months later, the Editor in his letter of December, 24, 1928, said : "You have laid us under a deep debt of gratitude by supplying us very many interesting news-items. I am happy to inform you that your despatches are very much appreciated here."

Mr. A.S. Iyenger, Editor the Associated Press of India, New Delhi, in his letter of December, 30, 1930, wrote : "We hereby request you to send us all available news in Kashmir State for the use of the Associated Press. "Mr. G.F. Crawley, news-editor of the Statesman, in his letter on January 29, 1931, said : "We shall be glad if you will act as our correspondent for the Jammu and Kashmir State, sending stories of first-class interest." On March 8, 1932 the Statesman Editor wrote to me: "I understand that Col. Colvin, the new Prime Minister of Kashmir State, desires to see you for a friendly discussion of the question of news. In a recent letter of yours you said that you found difficulty in getting news, and I think that as a result of your talk with Col. Colvin the difficulty will be settled." Later on, I met Col. Colvin and

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made certain suggestions regarding release of official stories which he was good enough to appreciate and accept.

Pandit Amolak Ram on the eve of his retirement as Editor the Tribune wrote : "During my stewardship of the Tribune you have always extended to me hearty cooperation and help in improving the news side of the paper. I feel but for your help and cooperation the position of the Paper would not have been as unassailable as it is today. I am writing this letter to express my grateful thanks to you for what you have done for the Tribune."

I have been representing some leading national dailies now for nearly four decades. I do not know of any occasion when my news story could be authoritatively contradicted. Of course, the authorities did occasionally use their power arbitrarily to punish me for disclosure of news-worthy facts unpalatable to them. I have always held the view that a news story should contain nothing but a fair and impartial presentation of facts without any attempt to minimise or exaggerate them. A correspondent should scrupulously avoid a personal bias or local prejudice or laying the colours too thick on one or other aspect of an incident.

While there can be no end to the risks-financial, mental and even physical, that a conscientious newsman will have to continue to face at the hands of totalitarian bureaucrats, unscrupulous politicians and profit-motivated capitalists, it will be interesting to recall some of the battles that I have had to wage while seeking to function as a newsman, in addition to the few experiences recorded earlier.

The Internment

Towards the end of July 1937, a Division Bench of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court consisting of Chief Justice Sheikh Abdul Qayoom and Justice Janki Nath Wazir (now chief justice, reduced the sentence of the accused in a cow-slaughter case from 7 years' rigorous imprisonment to that of one year. It was held that the offence was not committed to wound anybody's religious feelings or susceptibilities but was done secretly at night. The Hindus and Sikhs who had already been viewing with concern the Muslim agitation regarding the protection afforded under the law to the cow in the State, got alarmed and held protest meetings. Jammu City observed complete hartal for 35 days. There were processions and hartals in several other towns. There were also several clashes between the police and the demonstrators, hundreds of whom including women were injured. Numerous people were taken into custody. I was duty-bound to collect relevant news on the spot. As a matter of routine I kept notes of happenings with me. The authorities resolved to prevent the truth from going out. On August 24, 1937, I was manhandled, arrested and removed by the police to the city lock-up where

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I was kept for several hours. It was only after the arrival there of the District Magistrate, Col. Baldev Singh Pathania, that I was let off. Next day, however, I was externed from the city under an order reading : "Whereas it has been made to appear to me by credible information that you, Lala Mulk Raj Saraf, are fanning the present Hindu agitation, I, Col. Baldev Singh Pathania, District Magistrate, Jammu Province, Jammu, being thus satisfied that your activities are causing breach of the peace and disturbances of public tranquality and spreading hatered against the Government, hereby give direction by virtue of the powers vested in me under section 108-A Cr. P.C. clauses b, c and d that you shall remove yourself from Jammu town and shall remain in town of Samba for a period fo six months and shall not deliver any speech in any public meeting within the aforesaid period or participate in any activities. Given under my hand and the seal of the Court this 10th day of Bhadun 1994."

It may be mentioned here that there was never an occasion for me to deliver any speech or participate in any other activity except to work as a newsman.

In fact my presence in Jammu was regarded so dangerous that I was not later permitted even to pass through the town to attend the contempt proceedings pending against me before the Full Bench of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court. I had to undertake journey from Samba to Srinagar via Rawalpindi.

The Jammu Journalists' Association placed on record their deep sense of resentment at the 'barbarous maltreatment meted out to a press representative'. Prominent leaders like Sheikh Abdullah, Lala Hans Raj Vakil and Pandit Jia Lal Kilam expressed their shock and sorrow. An old brother journalist Pandit Vishwa Narth Kerni announced that he would not in protest publish his paper till my return to Jammu. The Tribune on September 3, 1937, editorially wrote: "In all civilised countries press representatives enjoy immunity from harassment and undue restriction. In fact they are provided with facilities by the authorities for performing their duties satisfactorily. We are, therefore, surprised to learn that the Kashmir Government has removed Lala Mulk Raj Saraf from Jammu where he has been functioning as a correspondent of several responsible newspapers, including Anglo-Indian journals, and interned him in a village. The publication of reports regarding lathi-charges and arrests at Jammu may be distasteful to the official, but that is no reason why a press representative should be deprived of his liberty. Either it should be proved that Mr. Saraf has been guilty of an offence against the State or he should be set at liberty."

The Qaumi-Dard, a leading English weekly of Srinagar edited by Shri D.N. Bazaz, wrote : "Mr. Mulk Raj Saraf is a pioneer journalist of the State who enjoys an inter-provincial fame. There has not been a single official or non-official of Kashmir so far who has not paid a

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glowing tribute to his high sense of responsibility and patriotism. Col. Colvin who was the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir only a few months ago, is reported to have said about Mr. Saraf that he conducted his paper like a true responsible journalist and always steered clear of communalism. But it was after all left for the present Government to see in Mr. Saraf a "dangerous" person whose presence at Jammu had placed the pace of the country in jeopardy. Does it go to the credit of the Government to intern such a responsible journalist and publicman on no evidence whatsoever? We may be accused of using strong language but as a well-wisher of the Government nothing would pain us more then finding that the Government because of a hasty action has lost its reputation for justice and fairplay. We make a strong appeal to Prime Minister Gopalaswami Ayyangar that he may personally go through the papers pertaining to Mr. Saraf's internment case. Mr. Ayyanger has a reputation for being an enlightened administrator. It is not too much to hope that he will undo a wrong that has been gratuitously done to a pioneer journalist and a publicman of our State."

Ultimately on the basis of certain assurances contained in a proclamation of Maharaja Hari Singh regarding cow-protection, the agitation which the High Court judgment had touched off, was called off. Consequently under orders of the Maharaja all the arrested people were released and all prosecutions pending in the Courts were withdrawn. Bonds taken for keeping the peace or being of good behaviour were also cancelled. My externment came to an end on September 23, 1937. The contempt of Court proceedings against me were also dropped.

The 'Roti' agitation

In 1943, Jammu city underwent a great suffering in what is known as the 'Roti' agitation resulting from soaring prices and scarcity of foodgrains. The Ranbir fully brought the acuteness of the situation to the notice of the authorities but in vain. The common hardship united all sections of the local population as rarely before. There were mass meetings and processions protesting against official apathy which was indeed callous. On September 24, 1943, thousands of townsmen including many women took out a procession in defiance of the order prohibiting assembly of five or more than five persons. When the processionist reached the city chowk, they were first lathi charged and then fired at. This resulted in the instaneous death of seven persons and injuries to many others two of whom also died later. The city was immediately placed under curfew and the army was called in to control the situation. The army units paraded the lanes in the evening buglling that the martial law had been enforced and anyone daring to come out of his residence would be shot dead. The authorities later, however, refused that any martial law had been imposed.

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The State Assembly had commenced its autumn session in Srinagar as scheduled on September 25, 1943, but it was prorogued by the Maharaja in view of the seriousness of the situation in Jammu. The Prime Minister, Colonel Sir Kailash Narayan Haksar, and the Revenue Minister, Shri Himmat Singh Maheshwari, were deputed to make a sifting enquiry on the spot. The Maharaja also donated Rs. 50,000 from his private pursue for the relief of distress caused by the scarcity of food supply in Jammu. Maharani Tara Devi and Yuvraj Karan Singh, too, contributed Rs. 5,000 each for the purpose. Shops for the sale of foodgrains at cheap rates were opened at once.

The Ranbir had to rise to the occasion. It vividly reported how the authorities had first miserably failed in assessing hardships of the public, and then prepetrated atrocities on them. The reports published in the Ranbir were being widely quoted by the Lahore press to condemn the State Government. The Prime Minister soon after his arrival from Srinagar called me and Om Saraf who as the Assistant Editor of the Ranbir had in a signed leading article given his eye witness account of the situation captioned "the barbarous madness of the inefficient and oppressive authorities." The Revenue Minister was also there. They accused us of having actually started and inflamed the agitation. A long argument followed. And in the end the Prime Minister was so much moved that he delivered as a cheque for Rs. 5,000/- which he desired me to distribute to the firing-sufferers. I later appointed a citizens' committee and got the money disbursed.

Meanwhile, the people persisted in their demand, which the Ranbir wholeheartedly supported, that an impartial enquiry be immediately held to find out the truth. Accordingly the Maharaja appointed a 3-member inquiry committee presided over by Sir Govind Madgaonkar, a retired Judge of the Bombay High Court and including Justice Dr. P.K. Sen and a member of His Highness's Board of Judicial Advisers and Justice Quazi Masud Hussan, a Judge of Jammu and Kashmir High Court. The town resumed normal work after 9-day Hartal.

But my job was not yet done. When the inquiry commitee commenced its proceedings in Jammu on October 20, the Public Defence Committee headed by Lala Roop Chand Nanda, a brilliant member of the local bar, who was later assisted by the well-known national leader, Dr. Saif-ud-Din Kitchlu Barrister-at-law, thought of producing me as their first witness before the probe body. This meant more of tension between the Ranbir and the authorities. Nevertheless I had no choice but to uphold the right cause. When in the course of my deposition I was asked by Chairman Madgaonkar as to what the Government Officers stationed in Jammu were doing all the time to ease the situation. I politely replied, 'they were asleep.' I well remember that my innocent yet well-pointed remarks created a great stir in the Committee Hall and the

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Chairman had to admonish the audience to observe strict silence in the Court. For more than a day I was in the witness-box under a heavy fire of cross-examination by the Advocate General, my esteemed friend, Pandit Lok Nath Sharma.

The report of the inquiry committee was never made public. But this resulted in the dismissal and demotion of several officers which was a clear indication that their case had failed, thus amply vindicating my role as a newsman.

Sheikh Abdullah's Arbitrariness

The readers should be now well aware of the important mile-stones in the labyrinth of journalism in the State. In early 1920's the August Ruler would not be even prepared to entertain a request for bringing out a newspaper. In early 1930's factual report of the local demonstration against Gandhi Ji's arrest would earn the total ban on the publication of the only newspaper in the State simply because the Ruler wanted to make his position clear in the eyes of the British Government. In 1937, during the time of Prime Minister N. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, a reporter could be locked up and then externed from the Capital without being even told what story circulated by him was considered objectionable. In 1943, Sir Kailash Narayan Haksar, the then Prime Minister would not shirk in seeking to make a journalist a scapegoat in order to protect his officers responsible for shooting dead nine citizens. In 1945, Sir B.N. Rau another Prime Minister appeared on the scene with the bold statement that he wanted to make Jammu and Kashmir a model State but he had felt little hesitation in suggesting to the local newsmen at their firstever conference with a Prime Minister, to send to the Government all reports received by them against any officers before publishing them. The newsmen, of course, did rise to a man to defend their right to publish all reports at their own risk. It was left to Mr. R.C. Kak, the first Kashmiri – speaking Prime Minister, to ban the premier newspaper in his territory for making a vigorous plea for the accession of the State to Indian Union. It, however, fell to the lot of Sheikh Abdullah – the first popular Prime Minister of the State, to create conditions for the disappearance in 1950 of the first and foremost newspaper of Jammu and Kashmir which had fought longer than he for the cause of the people.

As to how arbitrarily the Sheikh and his officers behaved in respect of the press, would be clear, apart from the foregoing account, from a few typical incidents. On August, 25, 1949, the Governor and District Magistrate, Jammu, Lala Brindra Ban ordered me not to publish or send any news regarding Praja Parishad agitation unless it was verified by himself. The Ranbir while opposing the agitation had published that the police had made indiscriminate arrests

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taking into custody even those persons who in no way were connected with the agitation. The order of the District Magistrate stated : "The news published in the Ranbir is not only unauthenticated but to say the least irresponsible also and that cannot be expected from a newspaper of the standing of the Ranbir." Assuming that to be true, what sin the outside newspapers, whom I represented and whom the order had sought to deprive of my service, had committed? The order on the face of it made a fantastic reading and was, of course, soon withdrawn.

After the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly had been set up, Sheikh Abdullah sought an assurance from the Government of India that the ratification by the Consembly of the State's accession to India would be accepted as final. This Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru did not concede although he would not prevent the Consembly from expressing its view in the matter. Undoubtedly an awkward position confronted the Sheikh : his verdict as the leader of the Consembly was not quite binding on the country for which he stood while the country he opposed was sparing no propaganda to destroy his image as a popular Kashmiri hero. In the meantime the Sheikh had also actually become somewhat unpopular for his inability to give to the people a clean, efficient and sympathetic administration. In that delicate situation he chose to regain his popularity with unsophisticated people by appearing to be a little neutral between India and Pakistan. In April 1952, he delivered his well-known controversial speech in Ranbirsingh Pura border town indicating a clear rethinking on his part *vis-a-vis* relationship between Srinagar and Delhi.

Honourbound I reported it to my papers. So did several others including my sons, Om and Suraj. Besides strong public reaction, Government of India was also shocked and probably pulled up the Sheikh who then decided to make the newsmen the scapegoat. Within a few days he had an opportunity while inaugurating a canal park in Jammu, to take to task the newsmen for what he described as misrepresenting him. But what clarification he actually made only confirmed his Ranbir Singh Pura speech. The talented P.T.I. representative, Mr. Rajagopalan, rightly reported that what the Sheikh had earlier stated at Ranbirsingh Pura was considered to be factually correct by himself. I had also reported to my papers more or less in the same strain. This further enraged both the Sheikh and his critics for their own reasons with the result that the political situation began to worsen rather speedily.

Upon this, Mr. Rajagopalan was got transferred from the State which made him rather happy. Three of us were served with notices warning us that we could be deprived of our privileges as newsmen. As a matter of fact it had been and continues to be all risk to be a good reporter in this State. In reply I submitted that I had merely done my duty and I intended

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to maintain my privileges only by reporting what I thought to be right. My sons also replied in the same vain.

Following the Ranbirsingh Pura speech, came what were called the Delhi Agreement between the State and the Union Government. But it was clear that the Sheikh still had his reservations. The monarchical system was abolished as were the big landed estates. The last of the Dogra rulers – Yuvraj Karan Singh – became the first elected Head of the State called Sadar-i-Riyasat. But effective steps were not being taken to establish constitutional relationship between the State and the Union as envisaged in the Delhi Agreement. Meanwhile the Praja Parishad started a mass agitation which was seized upon by the Sheikh to project his ideas about the future affiliation of the valley. In April 1953, while performing the opening ceremony of a tube-well near the Jammu Tawi bridge he stated he would frankly tell Jammu people : "If you can't live with us, you are free to go your own way, we will go our own. Good-bye."

Yet, to prevent the people outside the State from coming to know the acutal state of his mind a novel technique was evolved. The write-ups prepared in advance of delivery of his speeches would be circulated to the newsmen who would be asked to confine their reporting to these official versions which were far from factual. I naturally resisted all such attempts. Soon the Sheikh was to fall out with far more powerful personalities on the national scene, leaving him little time to clear his accounts with 'smaller fries.'

Clash with Bakshi

Sheikh Abdullah went off the scene as the Prime Minister on August 9, 1953. Notwithstanding the present widespread sympathy for the man for his past role and prolonged suffering, it may be conceded that administrative standards had gone down considerably during his tenure. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad who succeeded him was a far more shrewd and practical man. With such able associates as Dr. Karan Singh and Mr. G.M. Sadiq by his side together with liberal central aid, the Bakshi soon consolidated his position. He began with very cordial relations with the press as with many others. It was during his time that I got an opportunity to go on my firstever foreign tour as the sole delegate from Jammu and Kashmir to the First World Congress of Journalists at Helsinki, Finland, in June 1956. My brief impressions of this travel as also the welcome address presented to me on my return home in August 1956 are given in Appendices I and II. Needless to add this 'token of great love and respect' is my most cherished possession coming as it does from my associates in the profession.

The things, however, began to deteriorate after some time. The Bakshi's dynamism was somewhat tampered with disregard for scruples. The power went into his head. His lust for

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authority appeared limitless. He came to have faith in his world being law and everyman carrying a price. He naturally lost all confidence in his colleagues whom he considered misfit in his scheme of affairs. This caused a split between him and Mr. G.M. Sadiq soon after the general election in 1957. This was the crucial period for a conscientious journalist.

After parting company with the Bakshi, Mr. Sadiq set up the Democratic National Conference as the State's pro-India opposition party with a considerable following throughout Jammu and Kashmir. This unnerved the Bakshi as he saw in it the prospect of his possible replacement. While there could be little objectionable in the Bakshi and Mr. Sadiq opposing each other, the former was keen to ensure that the views of Mr. Sadiq should not be published in the national press. He actually won over a few journalists but found a difficult man in me. Having failed to persuade me to follow his wishes the Bakshi thought of contacting the newspapermen whom I represented in the State. All his efforts, however, ended in fiasco as my long connections with the national press which I had served so passionately with a sense of full responsibility, proved too much for his resourceful machinations.

The Bakshi literally shuddered to think of getting divorced from the political power. In January 1958, Sheikh Abdullah was released from long detention. This wass most unpalatable to him but he could hardly murmer in view of the known policy of the Government of India. Yet, he was so afraid of the Sheikh's coming closer to Delhi that at a press conference in answer to a certain query from me, he as if awakened from a dream-land thrice stated that "Sheikh can never come to power". I had to rather strongly tell him that I never asked if the Sheikh could. The Bakshi soon put the Sheikh again in the jail in April 1958 after taking advantage of the Sheikh's own reluctance to visit Delhi.

Once the State's Inspector General of Police, Mr. D.W. Mehra, told me in confidence that he had been asked by Prime Minister Bakshi to haul me up under the Public Security Act, if I did not contradict my story regarding reported occupation by the Chinese of some salt lakes in Ladakh. The Bakshi's game appeared to be that as my story involved the Defence Ministry, I could perhaps be browbeaten. Meanwhile, however, my story had been discussed in the Parliament and the Prime Minister Nehru himself had made a statement which more or less confirmed my report. I told Mr. Mehra that he was free to plan his own strategy to satisfy his angry boss. Thereupon the Inspector General of Police wrote to me a letter asking me to "intimate the source of my information so that proper action may be taken against the person who has been the cause of dissemination of such false and alarming news." As he failed to get any response from me, he got the case registered with the local police. I and my son Suraj who represented the Times of India were summoned to the City Police Station

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where some silly questions were put to us which we replied suitably. Nothing was heard of the case afterwards. On being informed by me of the episode a prominent editor wrote to me "never mind, you are in a good company."

Why did Bakshi resign under the Kamraj Plan in 1963 ? Much has been said and written on this subject. The simple answer to it is that he tendered his resignation as he never expected it to be accepted. And it is now on record that as soon as its acceptance was announced, he stage-managed protests to force Mr. Nehru to reconsider his decision. I was in Srinagar on the morning following the night when his offer to resign had been accepted. He had arrived from Delhi and was being taken out in a procession by his admirers. I could read from his face the sorrowful sleepless night he must have spent after getting 'Kamrajed'. The Bakshi rightly realised that I could not be party to his heartfelt desire for the come-back. Once during those fateful days he invited local newsmen to a dinner, I was not. There was, therefore, no occasion for me to visit him. The next morning, however, an old brother journalist revealed it to me that the Bakshi in the presence of pressmen had summoned his gate-keeper and instructed him that I had not been invited to the dinner and if I still happened to enter his residence, I should be prevented. Such was his deeply-felt longing to suppress a dissenting voice. I, on my part, informed my papers and told them I would not be meeting the Bakshi again on any occasion unless and until he made amends. Soon he sent me his apologies–how *bona fide,* I would not say.

Sadiq's Liberalization

Bakshi Ghulam Mohd was suceeeded by his nominee Khwaja Shamsuddin on October 12, 1963. Prime Minister Shamsuddin's tenure of office, though eventful, was shortlived. First, because he did not enjoy the confidence of Mr. G.M. Sadiq whom Delhi expected to succeed the Bakshi who himself had assured Mr. Nehru that he would ensure Mr. Sadiq's election as the new leader of the legislative wing of the ruling party. Secondly, because the Bakshi soon got disgusted with Khwaja Shamsuddin who had begun showing signs of independent judgment without, of course, enjoying the support of the party which remained a convenient tool in the hands of the Bakshi.

Prime Minister Shamsuddin was soon to meet his Waterloo when the National Conference party itself and its Government too, proved unequal to the unprecedented situation resulting from the theft of the Prophet Mohammad's sacred hair from the Hazratbal shrine, near Srinagar, in December 1963. There was a mass upsurge which literally humbled the pride of almost every rulingman except shrewd Mr. Sadiq who rode on the popular wave and whom

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Bakshi, ultimately, in the presence of the then Union Minister without portfolio Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, accepted as the new Prime Minister. Mr. Sadiq was elected the new leader of the State legislature on February 27, 1964, and was sworn in as the Prime Minister the next day.

Prime Minister Sadiq began with the much-needed promise of introducing what he described in the Press Conference on March, 1, 1964, as a policy of liberalization and democratisation. Speaking on behalf of the newsmen I assured the new Prime Minister of the full support and cooperation of the Press in the State in his efforts to ensure social justice and equity for the common man.

It will be perhaps yet too early to pronounce a judgment on Mr. Sadiq's role as the Head of the Government. For, the plain fact is that it has been a period of great strains and stresses and he had, perforce, to work within certain limitations. True to his policy he released Sheikh Abdullah from long incarceration. He brought about further integration of the State with the Union and also got changed his own nomenclature from that of the Prime Minister to the Chief Minister. But when in pursuance of this policy Mr. Sadiq sought to convert the National Conference itself into the State unit of the Indian National Congress on January 26, 1965, it extremely upset the Sheikh who embarked upon a movement called 'Tarak-i-Mawalat' aiming at the social boycott of the Congressmen in the Valley. The movement fizzled out but left behind traces of bitterness. Meanwhile Sheikh Abdullah had left for Haj pilgrimage which proved more political than religious. He happened to meet among others, Chinese Premier Chou-En-lai abroad and was arrested, following a great hue and cry all over the country, as soon as he landed at the Palam Airport New Delhi May 9, 1965. Within less then three months later Pakistan sent thousands of armed infiltrators into the State and a full fladged Indo-Pak war ensued followed by an unusual drought.

That Chief Minister Sadiq should have braved all this and survived is, indeed, a matter of no mean achievement. Notwithstanding the doubtful support of a legislature which had refused to elect him as its leader when Bakshi Ghulam Mohd was succeeded by Khwaja Shamsuddin, Mr. Sadiq has been able to lay the foundations of an institutionalised administration which had become highly personalized in the hands of his predecessors. But his regime has not been without failings of its own, either. There have been a few cases, for example, when the press could have been treated more sympathetically. Those hit hard, on their part, could also, perhaps, be more responsible. It is hoped that after the general election, Mr. Sadiq assured of the loyalty of the Congressmen of his choice in the State legislature, will be in much better position to translate his pious wishes into action.

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A PUBLICIST AS A PUBLICMAN

Life need not be, as perhaps it cannot be divided into water-tight compartments. True, as a reporter it has always been my endeavour to avoid what may be called taking a partisan view. But as a journalist who founded and edited the first newspaper in Jammu and Kashmir I have my own ideas. These ideas have inevitably landed me in various spheres of public activity at important occasions. Yet my such sojourns have never gone beyond the limits where I have felt I would not be doing justice to my role as a conscientious publicist.

Pro-Congress Activity

The Ranbir took birth in a climate which was very different from what it is today when we are a free nation committed to such ideals as secularism, democracy and socialism. There was in Jammu and Kashmir little organised political activity as such at that time. The fountain-head of all justice was the Maharaja who was also the Chief Executive as well as the Commander-in-Chief of the State Forces. Nevertheless, his dependence on British imperialism, was a hard fact. There was a popular saying that the people in the Princely India suffered from double slavery. Mahatma Gandhi was being only realistic when he laid down the strategy that the Indian States were not to be associated with the Congress struggle for freedom that was being launched throughout the British India. This, however, did not constitute any bar to the people in the Indian States themselves making independent efforts to assert their democratic rights.

The Dogra Sadar Sabha was the solitary political body in the State during those days. Founded jointly by two lawyers, Lala Hans Raj Mahajan and Sahebzada Hazrat Shah, with the good wishes of Maharaja Pratap Singh and Raja Amar Singh, father of Maharaja Hari Singh, in 1905, the DSS provided a common platform to various people belonging to different faiths and regions in Jammu and Kashmir. Under the impact of events in the British India, it began growing into a mass organization but when the Ranbir was banned in 1931, the DSS was also declared unlawful. It had actually sought affiliation with the Indian National Congress which was, of course, refused. I was an active associate of the DSS all those years and also worked as its General Secretary for a long time.

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All India States' Peoples' Conference

In December 1926, I visited Cawnpore, accompanied by my wife and two children, Om aged nearly five and Suraj aged about three. There I had to play my humble role in getting Pandit Shanker Lal Kaul elected as President of the All India States' Peoples' Conference whose session was held along with that of the Indian National Congress under the presidentship of Nightingale of India Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. Mr. Kaul in the course of his presidential address stressed that the Rulers of the Indian States should avoid playing the role of 'little tsars in their kingdoms.'

Mr. Kaul's was a noble soul. A perfect gentleman he was rather a misfit in his surroundings. He had resigned from the post of Assistant Secretary in the Government of Jammu and Kashmir State in 1925 and had settled in plains. He was a regular subscriber of the Ranbir. He once wrote to me: "Your high character has captivated my heart. We want in Kashmir men who have honour, who will not lie, who will dare to differ with their friends and agree with their enemies if necessary and with whom patriotism is not mere love of excitement and clamour, men who say the right word, the true word at all times."

Forced by circumstances Mr. Kaul later rejoined Government service and retired as the State Publicity Chief. He passed away on September 1, 1952.

Battle of ballot

On October 17, 1934, Maharaja Hari Singh issued a 700-word proclamation establishing for the first time a Legislative Assembly called Praja Sabha which was more nominated than elected—and that, too, on the basis of a restricted and communal franchise. As one who had been persistently insisting on the need for a democratic legislature in the State, many friends wanted me to contest my home constituency which covered the entire district of Jammu. My rival was Chaudhary Chattar Singh, a former Governor of Jammu Province, who was closely related to the royal family. He was an affectionate gentleman but belonged to the camp of the vested interests who were always apprehensive that an Assembly would adversely affect the royal prerogatives. I fought the battle and lost it in an atmosphere surcharged with casteism in its crudest form.

Sheikh Abdullah and his right-hand man at the moment, Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, in a joint letter dated September 1, 1934, expressing sorrow over my electoral defeat wrote me: "It is generally those selfless workers who make the supreme sacrifices for any cause from the beginning that meet with this fate. You can, however, rely on the experience of your

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predecessors in the path that the ultimate success is yours and the more earnest efforts you put in, the more failures you face the more shall be the sweetness of the final result."

The daily Milap of Lahore on October 3, 1934, editorially wrote : "Lala Mulk Raj Saraf has fought the election battle with very clean hands. If the atmosphere had not been polluted by bringing in such questions as Mahajan, Rajput, agriculturist non-agriculturist etc. his success was a certainty. The creation of such vicious atmosphere is extremely detrimental to the Hindus of Jammu and Kashmir and the very first loss that they have suffered thereby is that they have been deprived of their representation in the Assembly by a competent persons like Lala Mulk Saraf."

Decision by lot

The four-yearly election for the second Praja Sabha was scheduled to be held in May, 1938. I was, again, among the six contestants in the field for the Jammu District (Hindu) seat. There were besides my self, Lala Hans Raj Mahajan Vakil, Pandit Prem Nath Dogra, Brigadier Onkar Singh, Chaudhari Lachhman Singh Charak and Thakur Qandhara Singh, formerly Manager Kashmir State Property in Lahore.

At the atmosphere was somewhat charged with communal tension and caste bickerings, it was thought advisable to avoid heat and dust of a contest and have resort to lottery. All agreed. After the scrutiny was over, lots were drawn. The luck favoured the young Charak whose father Chaudhari Chattar Singh had defeated me in 1934 election.

Towards Regional Harmony

In 1930's times seemed to be moving rather very fast in the State as well as all over the world. Sheikh Abdullah who was a student when the Ranbir started publication had appeared on the scene as a popular Kashmir leader with the support of a band of intelligent youngmen. They carried on their activities under the name of the Muslim conference. But there was little communal about their general outlook. With their emergence, the Dogra Sadar Sabha began to lose its influence with the Kashmiri-speaking gentry. I directed my efforts to bringing the Valley and the DSS closer so as to promote harmony between the two regions at the popular level.

In June 1935, I was deputed by the Dogra Sadar Sabha to meet the Prime Minister Colvin in Srinagar in connection with certain grievances of the public particularly relating to the working of the two commissions set up by the Government to re-examine the State-subject certificates. The Sabha had also authorised me to seek active cooperation of Kashmir leaders

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in this connection. Accordingly I held consultations with several friends in Srinagar and a deputation was ultimately arranged.

Col. Colvin was much impressed with what the deputationists had to lay before him. He lost no time in sending a written reply to the deputationists. The very next day after consulting his colleagues in the State Council, Col. Colvin issued a comprehensive order. The first part of the order read : "A deputation consisting of Pandit Jia Lal Kilam, Lala Mulk Raj Saraf, Khwaja Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Sardar Kanahya Singh waited on the Prime Miniser on June 27, 1935, in regard to the question of State-subject certificate to examine which two commissions have been set up, one in Srinagar and one in Jammu. They presented a typed memorial and the Prime Minister promised to answer the various points raised in that memorial after consultation with his colleagues. He has now consulted them and decided to convey the following information and decision of Government on the different points raised in the memorial."

And the last para of the order said : "It is hoped that the decision of Government as detailed above will convince all State subjects that the Government have full sympathy with the aim of making the work of the two commissions real and lasting and that there are only few points of detail on which the Government are not able to agree with the deputation as they involve principles which every Government must affirm."

Muslim Conference becomes National Conference

Ultimately, the Dogra Sadar Sabha could not keep pace with the times. It gradually became a hand-maid of reactionary and feudal elements who were incapable of seeing beyond their nose. Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues, on the other hand, were able to organise themselves into a force to be reckoned with. They were also realistic to develop contacts with non-Muslim intelligentsia. At my request the Sheikh spoke from the platform of the DDS once or twice mainly laying emphasis on the Hindu-Muslim unity. Eventually the Sheikh group was itself good enough to think of abandoning their communal label. On June 11, 1939, at a special session of the Muslim Conference held in Mujahid Manzil Srinagar under the presidentship of Khwaja Ghulam Mohd Sadiq, the resolution seeking the transformation of Muslim Conference into National Conference, was adopted with only three out of about 200 delegates, dissenting. I was in the company of Sardar Budh Singh and Pandit Jia Lal Kilam, Sham Lal Saraf, Prem Nath Bazaz and Kashap Bandhu as special invitees. We participated in the deliberations when the red plough flag was unanimously adopted as the National Conference flag. Soon after, the first plenary session of the National Conference held at Anantnag affirmed it. I, however,

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politely declined Sheikh Abdullah's offer to become a member of the first executive of the National Conference as it would have seriously interfered with my work as a journalist. Asked by the Sheikh to suggest another name, I proposed that of Lala Girdhari Lal Anand, a prominent publicman of Jammu, who was included in the executive.

National Conference Inducted in Jammu

Sheikh Abdullah on his visits to Jammu invariably came to my office where he would spend long hours in developing contacts with prominent local people. Our mutual association was duly noticed by the Hindu communalists. Once when at a public meeting held a talab Khatikan under the presidentship of Chaudhari Ghulam Abbas I spoke of the Sheikh as a great nationalist, I was accused by the Jammu Hindu press of making 'insolent outburst, and also jeeringly dubbed as 'a would-be candidate for a would-be-ministership in the would-be Abdullah ministry.'

On November 17, 1940, the foundation of the National Conference in Jammu was laid in my office. The meeting was presided over by Sardar Budh Singh and attended among others by Sheikh Abdullah, Maulana Masoodi, Sardar Mohinder Singh, Chaudhari Mohammad Shafi, Lala Girdhari Lal Anand, Shri Dina Nath Saraf, Pandit Trilochan Dutt, Mr. K.D. Uppal, Shri Gopal Dass Dhawan, Shri Balram Bhasin, Lala Hari Chand Chadda, Lala Amar Nath Talwar and Om Saraf, then a student leader.

At one time the Prime Minister, Sir Gopalaswami Ayyangar had reasons to be much offended with the conduct of affairs by the National Conference High Command. The National Conference leaders, it appeared, could not then for certain reasons afford to incur displeasure of the Prime Minister and very much wished to have the relation with him normalised. They asked me to intervene in the matter. When I met the Prime Minister, I found his attitude very stiff and uncompromising "Mr. Saraf, you are at liberty to talk to me on any Public matter whatsoever, but please do not talk to me about these leaders: their behaviour is so disgusting" he told me, turning the palm of his right hand across his cheeks as was his wont. It was only after the lapse of some time that the Prime Minister was found in a more chastened and receptive mood to listen to what these leadres had got to say. The same Prime Minister and the same National Conference High Command, however, became nearer, if not the nearest, each other towards the end of the Ayyangar regime in the State; so much so that Shri Ayyangar successfully resisted the pressure put on him by the Political Department of the Government of India to arrest Sheikh Abdullah during the 'Quit India' movement. In the years to come the Sheikh was the Deputy leader of the Indian delegation headed by Shri

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Ayyanagar which went to the United Nations to argue Indian complaint of Pakistani aggression on Kashmir.

'Quit Kashmir Movement'

With his emergence as an energetic nationalist leader it did not take Sheikh Abdullah long to establish cordial relations with the Congress leaders in the British India. In the middle of February 1939 I accompanied the Sheikh to the Ludhiana session of the All India States' Peoples Conference held under the presidentship of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru who, unlike Gandhiji, believed in actively helping the people in Princely India in hastily getting rid of their feudal regimes. Both of us along with a few other local friends also attended the Udaipur session of the AISPC which was again presided over by Mr. Nehru in 1945. By then the Sheikh had become an all India figure. The Udaipur conference greatly added to the popularity and stature of the Sheikh. After the session was over, he accompained by Sardar Budh Singh, Pandit Sham Lal Saraf and myself toured several parts of Rajasthan.

From Rajasthan Sheikh Abdullah went to Bombay where Maharaja Hari Singh was also staying. There the Sheikh wrote a letter to the Maharaja seeking an interview with him. The reply that the Sheikh got was indeed unfortunate. He was curtly told that a request for interview with the Maharaja could come only through his Prime Minister, Mr. R.C. Kak, who was then in Jammu. This greatly disappointed the Sheikh who felt humiliated. No wonder if the foundation of the 'Quit Kashmir' agitation that was later on started by the Sheikh was the result of such frustration. Mr. Asaf Ali who defended the Sheikh in the court, described 'Quit Kashmir' as a cry of despair otherwise as he put it "this slogan had no significance other than the establishment of a sound constitutional relationship between a constitutional monarch and the people from whom he should derive his title and power."

Some other Activities :

I have been also associated with various social and other activities. Briefly recollecting. I was elected the President of the three-day sixteenth annual session of the All India Mahajan Conference held at Shakargarh, now in Pakistan, in October 1931; made the honorary Joint Secretary of the central committee of the Jammu and Kashmir Bank in 1931; presided over the fourth Northern India Adult Education Conference in Srinagar in August 1943 (for presidential address vide Appendix III); worked with Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru to collect Kasturba Memorial Fund in the State; was elected President of the Harijan Conference in Khuiratta, Mirpur, now in Pak-occupied Kashmir; led the seven-man delegation on behalf of

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the Dogri Sansatha Jammu to participate in the first All India Cultural Conference held in Red Fort, Delhi, in March 1952.

I have alway happily found myself in the midst of ever-enlarging circle of acquaintances at home and abroad. Such contacts sometimes lead to exchange of letters. Such correspondence is at once entertaining as well as educative. I can not judge the worth of my letters written to others but I have come, in the course of time, to possess many invaluable letters from numerous friends revealing one or the other aspect of a situation or a personality. A few of these letters have been referred to elsewhere. The following extract from an important letter which an American friend sent to me in March 1929 may be read with interest. "I still think of the splendid time I had in Jammu and of your splendid hospitality. I am often with all of you in spirit. I want to help India as far as I can. Please translate the enclosure, publish it in the Ranbir and send me a copy. Will you? Will you? If you could smuggle the letter or your Hindustani recast through a reliable Peshawar friend to Kabul, Herat and Kandhar, that it may appear in an Afghan translation in the papers over there, I thing, it would be serviceable to the Indian cause. Most people here believe that the Afghan revolution was secretly manipulated by the British Government: such a progressive and independent ruler as the Amir Amanullah might influence, to England's disadvantage, the Maharaja of Kashmir.

"I am very busy lecturing, writing and broadcasting; if India wants me I am at her beck and call".

Love for Travel

In the end I may also take my readers into confidence about another aspect of my life. I love travelling which has benefitted me both as a journalist and otherwise. I am perhaps the most widely travelled journalist in Jammu and Kashmir. My travels made me an eye witness of many historical occasions. I was eye-witness to Lala Lajpat Rai receiving his share of lethal blows at Lahore on March 10, 1928 (to which, alas, he ultimately succumbed) when Mr. Sandres, the European Assistant Superintendent of Police, had ordered lathi charge on the huge crowd demonstrating against the all-while 7-member Simon Reforms Commission which included Mr. Atlee who later became Prime Minister of Great Britain. It was on the same fateful evening that a mammoth public meeting was held outside the Mori Gate Lahore where Lala ji made the prophetic utterance : 'Every blow aimed at me will prove a last nail in the coffin of the British Empire."

I participated in the Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress in December 1929 when it pledged itself, under Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru's leadership, to the attainment of

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complete national independence. I was present at the Srinagar special session of the Muslim Conference in June 1939 when it converted itself into the National Conference. In August 1945 I participated in the historial Sopore Session of the National Conference when in the presence of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Frontier Gandhi) and Khan Abdul Samad Khan (Baluch Gandhi) it adopted the socio-economic plan of ' New Kashmir' as its ultimate objective. I also attended the Lahore session of the All India Muslim League as a pressman when in July 1944 it declared Pakistan to be its goal.

In May 1945, in consultation with the great educationist Mr. K.G. Saiyidain who was the State's Director of Education, I journeyed to Hyderabad to study the working of Osmania University. This visit reinforced me in my view to get established a University in my own State. I continued my efforts for the purpose which was achieved only in 1948. I had the good fortune of flying to Delhi to take part in Gandhiji's funeral procession and pay my last homage to the father of the Nation on January 31, 1948. The solemn occasion moved me–as everyone else–to the depth of my heart and was also reminiscent of the never-to-be forgotten days when I used to sit at Gandhiji's feet, first at the prayer hours at the Lahore residence of Sarla Devi Chaudharani, wife of Shri Rambhuj Dutt and then after partition at the Birla House, New Delhi.

I was thrilled to see the inauguration by Sheikh Abdullah of Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir in Srinagar in November 1951. I was also present, 8 years later, in the Court of Special Magistrate, when the Sheikh was made an accused in what is known as the Kashmir Conspiracy case.

As indicated earlier I attended the First World Congress of journalists at Helsinki (Finland) and later had opportunity to visit some other foreign lands. I was privileged to attend the momentous Bombay session of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists inaugurated by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru in December 1963.

It has been always my effort to be in Delhi on Republic Day celebrations and occasional visits there by the leading men of the world such as Queen Elizabeth, President Eisenhower, Mr. Khrushchev and Mr. Bulganin.

I have also not lost my fondness of travel on foot which I acquired in my early days when I had often to cover 25 miles distance between my home town Samba and the capital city of Jammu, not always without a head-load. This has indeed enabled me to keep, in all humility, my head erect in every sense of the word.

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GOLDEN JUBILEE

I completed my seventy second year on April 8, 1966 running my fiftieth year as a journalist. The Sach, a popular local Urdu Weekly which had been founded by a great freedom-fighter, Raja Mohammad Akbar Khan, in 1930's. has been serialising my autobiography for more than over two years now. Its editor Master Roshan Lal thought of celebrating the occasion by throwing open an 'At home'.

Among those who attended the function were Ministers Trilochan Dutta, Mohammad Ayub Khan, Pir Gias-ud-Din and A.M. Tariq, State Jana Sangh Chief Prem Nath Dogra and his General Secretary Rishi Kumar Kaushal, PSP Chief Dhan Raj Bhargotra, Wazir Ganga Ram former Home Minister, Brigadier Ghansar Singh, ex-Governor Gilgit, Shri Milkhi Ram, President Harijan Mandal, Shri R.N. Chowdhary, President Chamber of Commerce, Jammu, besides many other prominent citizens including, of course, all brother journalists.

In addition to the host, several others spoke on the occasion to praise my services in the cause of journalism. Minister Tariq recalled how he began his career with the Rattan. He said he could hardly believe that I was 72. Offering me a bouquet Pandit Baldev Prasad Sharma, Director, Radio Kashmir, Jammu, stated he was proud to claim that he had his earliest lessons in journalism at my hands. Pandit Prem Nath Dogra with whom I have had many occasions to differ during the course of long years of our association as publicmen, expressed his admiration for what he called my perfect sincerity of the purpose. Shri D.C. Prashant of P.T.I. remembered the days when the Ranbir played an important role on several crucial occasions in the history of the State. Shri Ved Bhasin, Editor the Kashmir Times, and Chaudhary Gian Chand too had a good word for my services in the cause of the people both as a publicist and a publicman.

Overwhelmed by such tributes, I thanked the host and others who had rather profoundly expressed their regard and affection for me. I assured them of my continued public service through journalism without fear or favour.

Many newspapers in and outside the State widely publicised the Golden Jubilee celebrations. The Blitz, Bombay, published a story with my picture speaking of "handsome tributes paid to the veteran journalist". The Kashmir Times wrote about "many 'firsts' to his credit. Besides the Ranbir he started the first children's magazine, the Rattan; set up the first printing press; attended the first world journalists meet at Helsinki; is the first state journalist who has widely travelled all over Europe, USSR and China; presided over the first All Jammu and Kashmir

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Newspaper Editors' Conference; and continues to be the first President of the Jammu and Kashmir Union of Working Journalists besides being a member of the Executive of All India Federation of Working Journalists". The Milap, New Delhi, in a feature described me as 'the father of journalism in Jammu and Kashmir' and spoke of my honest and courageous discharge of duty as a journalist.'

I was also recipient of numerous messages of felicitations and greetings from the friends so well-known in the world of journalism. Shri P.P. Singh, Head of Department of Journalism, Punjab University, wrote : "You have done pioneering work in the field of journalism in your State and served the Fourth Estate with the best in you. May you hit a century and more and continue to serve the profession with zeal and fervour. It was a pleasure travelling with you from here to Finland, Russia, China and back home. I treasure the memories of the happy time spent in your good company."

Shri Virendra, Chief Editor of the daily Pratap, said, "May I congratulate you heartily on this occassion ? It is indeed very gratifying to see a fellow journalist securing such a great success in his life and profession. You have kept the torch of freedom of expression always burning."

Rana Jang Bahadur Singh, a former Editor of the Tribune and the Times of India stated : "Your many-sided contribution to the development of journalism in Jammu and Kashmir covering a considerably long period is tremendous. Not many veteran journalists like you are left in our midst. I pay my humble tributes to you and your valuable work and wish you many a happy return of your birthday. I recall today with pleasure and pride my long and close association with you in the professional work and activities from Lahore to Helsinki and onward - we have travelled a memorable distance together."

Shri Balraj Puri, PSP leader, wired from New Delhi his "felicitations on golden jubilee of an eventful and inspiring career." Shri D.C. Sharma, Member Parliament, wrote "we all feel proud of what you have done in educating public opinion in Jammu and Kashmir". And, so did many others.

By the grace of God and the good wishes of a large number of friends all over the country, I am fit even today at 73, to carry out the mission of my life through pen. I may not be considered worldly-wise enough to have created a property in its crude form but I have complete satisfaction in having upheld certain values of life at any rate and helping a band of youngmen including my sons to get initiated in the noble profession of journalism and its allied spheres as responsible people ever prepared to work and to suffer, if need be, as conscientious journalists.

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ON INDEPENDENCE EVE

In May 1946 Sheikh Abdullah had launched his famous 'Quit Kashmir' movement. This he did without consultation of the Congress High Command and in a manner that smacked of regionalism. For instance, in one of his public speeches he attacked the Maharaja for pursuing a policy which allowed grant of *jagirs* to some Jammu people in the Kashmir Valley without granting any *jagir* to even a single Kashmiri in the Jammu region. Such criticism of a Maharaja who was in no way an alien, considering the State as a whole, was not approved by the Ranbir as well as many top Congress leaders excluding of course, Pandit Nehru.

Meanwhile Sheikh Abdullah had also been declared elected as the President of the All-India States 'Peoples' Conference in place of Pandit Nehru who was going to be elected the President of the Indian National Congress. On May 20, 1946, Sheikh Abdullah was arrested. Pandit Nehru wanted to defend him in the Court, but was stopped by the District Magistrate, Srinagar, Pandit Maharaj Kishen Dhar, at the Kohala bridge. In his characteristic style Pandit Nehru broke through the police cordon and reached Domel where he was detained in the Government Rest House. The Ranbir recorded its strong protest against the official handling of the situation at a moment when the country was engaged in a serious dialogue with the British Government regarding the transfer of power to the Indian people. Pandit Nehru, however, left the State following a call from the Congress High Command.

The writing on the wall was clear to the Ranbir. India was going to be not only freed but also partitioned as a result of growing tension between the Congress and the Muslim League. Fortunately for Kashmir, her popular movement as spearheaded by Sheikh Abdullah, had no love lost with the Muslim League and its leader Mr. Mohd Ali Jinnah whose bid to personally woo Kashmiri nationalist leaders had flopped earlier. But tensions between the Maharaja and those leaders made the prospect of Kashmir making its contribution towards the consolidation of the nationalist forces in the country, extremely difficult. The Ranbir could not but strongly stress the need for immediate release of Sheikh Abdullah who was undergoing 3 years' imprisonment in Bhaderwah jail following the Quit Kashmir movement which the Sheikh had later declared to be 'not against the person of the Ruler but against the autocratic regime'. Simultaneously the Ranbir demanded the accession of the State with the Indian Union. But Prime Minister Kak had developed his own outlook and approach. With a personal friendship spread over almost 25 years he seemed to expect from the Editor of the Ranbir an active support to his view-point. On the other hand, I was honour-bound to strenuously work in the

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direction which I, in all sincerity, felt to be right. Soon arose the important question of the Indian States joining the India's Constituent Assembly set up to frame the Constitution of free India. Several princely States chose to send their representatives to the Consembly. The Jammu and Kashmir Government, however, hesitated to take a timely action in the matter.

The Ranbir bitterly criticized the vacillating policy of the Government. In this connection the Ranbir which had become *daily* since December 1, 1946, in its editorial of March 15, 1947 quoted a statement made by the then Prime Minister Gopalaswami Ayyanagar on the floor of the Praja Sabha (as the J&K Legislative Assembly was then called) on April 4, 1942, when pressed by the members for information as to what the attitude of the Maharaja and the State Government was in relation to Sir Stafford Cripps' Mission that had arrived in Delhi from London in connection with constitutional changes in India. He had said: "Kashmir's attitude will be one of welcoming the formation only of a single Union for the whole of India (cheer) and the State will do its utmost to co-operate with the work of framing a constitution for it so that when the constitution is made, it may find itself able to accede to it. The Jammu and Kashmir State's people will, I have no doubt, not look with favour on any tendency towards the formation of a multiple Union in the country and in consequent disruption of what is now and what should in future continue to be a United India."

The Ranbir in its issue of April 6, 1942, had described this speech as welcome addition of a magnificent chapter in the modern history of India.

In a rather forceful language the Ranbir decried attempts as seemed afoot on the eve of national independence to keep Jammu and Kashmir aloof from India and characterized this as a big conspiracy against the State. Such criticism greatly upset Mr. Kak. Once the head of the Information Department told me with eyes almost wet that the Prime Minister had chided him more than once for his failure to win my favour. "Starve Mr. Saraf" into submission, Mr. Kak wrote ultimately on one of the files of the Information Department. Secret instructions had gone out not to send any advertisements to the Ranbir, nor even to subscribe the Rattan – the children's journal published by me, for any educational institution.

This was indeed little price to pay for the historic role which the Ranbir was destined to play in a most crucial hour of the Nation's destiny. The Ranbir continued to emphasize its twin demand for the release of Sheikh Abdullah and the accession of the State of India. Mr. Kak had, however, found powerful allies in Jammu where the prominent Hindu leaders had been given the impression that the Maharaja after the lapse of the British Paramountcy would do well to steer clear of India and Pakistan and even expand his kingdom later on. It may appear incredible now but it is a part of history that while repeatedly voicing a course of action which it considered to be absolutely in the interest of every section of the population in the State, the Ranbir had to face considerable

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resistance from the Jammu Hindu leaders. Once the copies of the Ranbir were made a bonfire of by some angry Hindu youngmen in the public thoroughfare of Pacca Danga in Jammu town.

The matters with the Ranbir came to a head when Acharya J.B. Kripalani, the then President of the Indian National Congress, visited Jammu on May 24, 1947, on a good-will mission. It was generally believed that his visit to the State was to study the situation on the spot and impress upon the Maharaja the desirability of releasing National Conference leaders including Sheikh Abdullah. Acharya Kirpalani stayed in the State Guest House. I went to meet him. As I was talking with the distinguished leader, Mr. Kak suddenly entered the room and asked the Acharya to enquire from me about the present attitude of the Sheikh. Though somewhat taken aback I told the President of the Congress it would be possible for me to know the mind of Sheikh Abdullah if Mr. Kak permitted me to interview him in the Bhadarwah jail. The matter ended there but Mr. Kak was apparently a bit nervous over his failure to secure a diplomatic hit, though a good diplomat he undoubtedly was.

Only four weeks after this incident, I was served with a notice by the District Magistrate, Jammu, on June 23, 1947, reading:

"I, Chet Ram Chopra, District Magistrate, Jammu Province, Jammu, hereby direct for the purpose of securing public safety and maintenance of public order and in exercise of the powers conferred on me by rule 35 of the Jammu and Kashmir Defence Rules, a continued in force by section 2 of the Emergency Provisions (Continuance Ordinance No. III of 2003) read with Notification No. B-437/45 P.B. forming annexure to Council Order No. 750-C of 1945 dated 6th August, 1945, that you shall not print or publish till further orders any copy of the newspaper, the daily Ranbir from the date of this order.

"Given under my hand and seal of the Court this day the 9th of Har, 2005".

As if this alone was not sufficient to crush me, another order, reproduced below, was simultaneously served on me. I read:

"I Chet Ram Chopra, District Magistrate, Jammu hereby direct for the purpose of securing public safety and maintenance of public order and in exercise of the powers conferred upon me by rule 35 of the Jammu and Kashmir Defence Rules as continued in force by Section 2 of the Emergency Provisions (Continuance Ordinance No. III of 2003) read with Notification No. B-437/45 P.B. forming annexure to Council Order No. 750-C of 1945 dated 6th August, 1945, that you shall not till further orders make use of the printing press named Prem Printing Press for the printing of any newspaper from the date of this order.

"Given under my hand and seal of the Court this day the 9th of Har, 2004."

There was obviously no previous warning, nor any security demand. No grounds whatever for the action taken were set forth in the arbitrary orders. Scores of people were working in the offices

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of the Ranbir and its Printing Press. With one stroke of pen all of them were thrown out of job for no fault of theirs. What more than this could there be indeed to "starve Mr. Saraf"?

On the day the orders were given, I was in Srinagar. The orders in Jammu were served on the Assistant Editor of the Ranbir – Om Prakash Saraf – at 9 in the night. Earlier in the morning the Additional District Magistrate had summoned him in his office and told him that as it would take some time to go through certain formalities in preparing the orders, the Ranbir should not be published on that day. To this the Assistant Editor and spiritedly replied that it was not possible to postpone the publication of the paper on verbal orders. Perhaps the authorities were yet awaiting full instruction from the Government in Srinagar.

On being informed on the telephone of the whole affair I immediately issued the following press statement from Srinagar:

"In view of the efforts that were being made in diverse ways to put pressure on the Ranbir during the past some months and the way the Ranbir was resisting those tactics, the prohibitory orders regarding the Ranbir and its Printing Press are not unexpected. Such orders cannot subdue my spirit nor undermine my determination. The efforts for the accession of the Jammu and Kashmir State of India as well as the release of Sheikh Abdullah and other national leaders which were being strenuously made by the Ranbir in the interest of the real and everlasting benefit of the State and its Ruler, would continue unabated."

The national press as well as the local press stood aghast. Even the pro-Pakistan newspapers like the Inquilab, Lahore, took the Government to task for its 'inhuman step'.

The conscience of the Government was perhaps also pricked. A spokesman of the Government suggested to me to express regrets to the Government suggested to me to express regrets to the Government and get the prohibitory orders rescinded. Another VIP approached me to ask for an undertaking for good behaviour in the future and every thing would be all right. I also received hints to put in representation asking in plain words for the resuscitation of both the Ranbir and the Printing Press and this would surely be done. I listened to all these things and kept mum as I had no doubt in my mind that the Maharaja himself, if he did not get rid of his lot of advisers, was bound to come to grief. While a good deal of harm had already been done, Mahatma Gandhi called on the Maharaja at Gulab Bhawan, Srinagar on August 1. This presumably paved the way for Mr. Kak's exist who was soon to lose his job and much more. On August 11, Mr. Kak was "permitted to retire from service." Major General Thakur Janak Singh, a retired Revenue Minister, was asked by the Maharaja to hold charge of the high office "pending permanent arrangements." Most people heaved a sigh of relief. A 'deliverance day' was celebrated by the National Conference.

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On August 26, 1947, I received the following order from the District Magistrate, Jammu: "I hereby withdraw my order dated the 9th Har, 2004 prohibiting you from printing and publishing the daily Ranbir." A similar order removing the ban on my Printing Press was also issued. The stand of the Ranbir was vindicated but, alas, the State had lost a golden opportunity to accede to the Indian Union in time.

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A World Record!

The 26-year-old Lala Mulk Raj Saraf started as a reporter with 'Bande Mataram' at Lahore early in 1920. He had, though, fallen in love with writing for newspapers around 1916 as a College student. His earliest assignments as reporter included coverage of the Hunter Commission set up by the British Government to inquire into the Jallianwala Bagh massacre by General Dyer. Even as Editor of 'Ranbir' (1924-50) while reporting major events for his own paper, he worked as Correspondent of several prominent national dailies. Reporting attracted his exclusive attention when 'Ranbir' ceased publication. He was representing 'Hindu', Madras, when he suddenly passed away aged 95, which made him the world record holder as an active reporter for 70 years. To have done it in a sensitive region like J&K in keeping with the best traditions of his noble profession earned him the title of 'Father of Journalism' both at the popular and official levels.

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A VISION OF JOURNALISM

Today marks the 109th birth anniversary of Lala Mulk Raj Saraf, the father of journalism in Jammu and Kashmir. His vision of journalism reflects itself in the following excerpts from the Presidential Address delivered by him at the Newspapers Editors Conference held in Srinagar on August 20, 1942:

What is a newspaper? An echo of the public voice. And what is the public voice? Nothing but the voice of truth; *vox populi vox dei*- the voice of the people is the voice of God. A journalist who hesitates in raising his voice for upholding truth and justice cannot deserve the honour of being called an editor; he is just like a beggar who uses his paper as a beggar's bowl.

Long before the advent of journalism when monarchical and oligarchical forms of Government were prevalent, rulers many a time went out in disguise to keep themselves in touch with the public opinion. Gradually this primitive way of gathering information developed into full-fledged journalism based on organised and scientific lines. And today as you all know, press is a mighty power – 'the fourth estate of the realm.' I cannot do better than quote the following lines expressing how journalism exercises a healthy influence on all walk of life.

"But mightiest of the mighty means, on which the arm of progress leans,

Man's noblest mission to advance

His woes assuage, his weal enhance

His rights enforce; his wrongs redress-

Mightiest of might is the press".

So far as the primary duty of an editor i.e. the publication of news is concerned, he has to discharge it honestly and wholeheartedly. He has to cater for almost all the shades of interest and taste of his readers and not limit it exclusively to his personal choice. In the publication of news he has to bear in mind that they are based on true facts.

One true news is worth more than hundreds of false and baseless rumours. Another guiding principle of true journalism is that a newspaper should in no case be made an instrument for grinding one's own axe. An editor should see that his very personality is lost in the glorification of high ideals. The tenets of journalism go so far as to require of him to invariably merge the first person singular 'I'

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into plural 'we'. He should act as a mirror to the public opinion losing his identity in it. So far as the creation and formation of public opinion is concerned, the duty of an editor is all the more difficult.

Sometimes he shall have to make great sacrifices in order to surmount hardships and obstacles that would confront him in the efficient discharge of his duties. Acts of oppression and suppression, fear of the rich and the temptations of filthy lucre have been brought into play all over the world to gag the press, not to speak of unfortunate India where even in ordinary circumstances the press has often to face innumerable difficulties in the mere expression of public opinion.

All this can be safely attributed to our slavery political as well as mental. This slavery is the root cause of our helplessness and discomfiture. Is it not then our sacred duty to shake off the shackles eating into the very vitals of our nation? Besides the government, there are also other forces which are bent upon thwarting the honest working of the press. It is really a Herculean task to cleanse the Augean stables and to steer the ship of journalism clear of many dangerous rocks-the iron grip of mighty potentates, irresistible temptations of mammon and innumerable other evils to which human nature is heir. This is not all. A journalist has to keep his readers abreast of the changing events of the ever changing world, expose the crooked designs of the authorities and to give vent to the public opinion in such a way that its grievances may be redressed, wrongs rectified, rights preserved and democratic principles upheld, In short, the all-round duties of a journalist consist in condemning high-handedness, uprooting cruelty, defending the oppressed and the downtrodden, putting a stop in injustice, helping to provide food for the hungry and employment for the unemployed, removing social evils, and imparting education to the public for their mental and spiritual development...

...The valuable part played by the India Press in infusing the spirit of nationalism among the people constitutes a glorious landmark in the history of our movement for freedom. Let us cast a glance on that ancient period of Indian history when the people loved to regard their kings as the incarnation of God, and guided by the same principles of Divine right of Kings, they felt no hesitation in looking upon even the British Government as the 'Mai Bap'; and let us also visualise the present-day India which sees its very salvation in raising the slogan of 'Quit India'. The role of the Indian press in bringing about such momentous changes as envisaged above cannot be overemphasized. Despite the political gulf and other difference of opinion, the Indian press has left no stone unturned to uphold those democratic principles for the preservation of which the Allies today claim to be fighting. We wish the Indian press were as free and unfettered as that of independent countries. It would have then made known to the world that it could perform wonders in safeguarding all the more zealously the principles of truth and justice. But to me the freedom of press does not mean the freedom whose fanciful vision is conceived by the fertile brain of Sir Sulfan Ahmed, Information Member, the Government of India...

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...I have also to make a few submissions to my brother journalists. Though it is presumptuous on my part to suggest anything to such luminaries as I find sitting before me. Yet the responsibilities that you have devolved on me to preside over your deliberations necessitate that I should make bold to say a few words in this connection. Journalism occupies a very high position in society and to maintain its prestige is the sacred duty of every journalist. For the accomplishment of this task no amount of sacrifice is to big. The press is not only free intrinsically but it has also undertaken upon itself the responsibility of being the torch-bearer of liberty for all the human beings.

The press is a mighty force which can be used entirely according to your own selected angle of vision. It is up to you to use it for destructive or constructive purposes.

The power of the press, you must know, is neither a gift bestowed on us by any capitalist nor an estate conferred on us by any Government. It is a trust placed in our hands by the people and to use it honestly is our conscientious duty. We should not be led rather misled, by any communal considerations nor any thing else should 'dwarf' us in the efficient discharge of our public duties. This power of press should certainly be exercised without any fear, favour of prejudice in uprooting cruelty and injustice and in advocating the cause of the oppressed and the down-trodden, the inarticulate labourers and farmers, and the dumb-driven indigents. No heed should be paid to any, sectional or communal. Narrow or Personal considerations. We should not be sentimental but realistic and should wholeheartedly follow the dictates of natural laws in this respect...

.....

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IN THE EYES OF CONTEMPORARIES

C Rajagopalachari
Governor-General of India (1949)
"The biggest single influence that today moulds the progress and character of a people is the newspaper. May 'Ranbir' continue its good work for many more years to come".

Dr. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya
President, Indian National Congress (I949)
"That 'Ranbir' should have struggled and survived a quarter of century with all its vicissitudes, is not a small matter".

Dr. Zakir Hussain
President of India (1968)
"I am grateful to you for your kind thought in having sent me your book *'Fifty Years As A Journalist'*. Indeed it makes interesting reading".

Dr. Hidayat Ullah
Vice-President of India (1984)
"You have fulfilled an imperative need of history by bringing out your travelogue *"Meri Pakistan Yatra"*.

Munshi Prem Chand (1924)
"It has given me great pleasure to know that 'Ranbir' has taken birth in a far-off place like Jammu".

Dr Karan Singh (1987)
"Lala Mulk Raj Saraf who has the distinction of being the founder-father of journalism in J&K has for more than seven decades worked for the advancement of the cause of free and healthy journalism. He is a beacon light for the young journalists".

Sheikh Abdullah
Chief Minister (1976)
"Hard work and sincerity of purpose are the hall-mark of his life. He blazed a trail through his dedicated and selfless work at a most critical juncture of our history and guided us in the freedom struggle".

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Mr. M.C. Mahajan, Ex-Chief Justice, Supreme Court of India (1967)
"Lala Mulk Raj Saraf who is a worthy and seasoned journalist and a renowned public figure, has rendered a notable service by bringing out the biography of Lala Hans Raj Vakil who was truly a lion-hearted social reformer".

Dr. A.S. Anand
Chief Justice, J&K High Court (1988)
"His contribution in the field of journalism is well known. He has for more than seven decades worked for the advancement of the cause of free and healthy journalism and has, in fact, laid its foundation in Jammu and Kashmir".

Janki Nath Wazir
Chief Justice J&K (1948-67)
"He had to meet great hardships and overcome number of hurdles before he established himself as a journalist. He worked as a missionary without fear or favour".

M.A. Ansari
Ex-Chief Justice, Kerala (1968)
"The urge which drove him to undertake the venture and the high standard of moral rectitude which he maintained are typical of the journalists' school to which he belonged".

Mr. Mohd Shafi Qureshi
Governor Bihar
"Under his stewardship 'Ranbir' played an important role in the freedom struggle and national reconstruction. He had been in the vanguard of all movements for social welfare".

Mr. D.D. Thakur, Ex-Dy. Chief Minister J&K (later Governor Assam)
"He is an embodiment of invaluable virtues—a splendorous noble personality".

R.R. Diwakar
(Journalist and Ex-Governor)
Chairman, Gandhi Memorial Trust
"I have commended your autobiography to my staff on 'Samyukta Karnataka'. It is not only a journalist's career but a brave and conscientious fighter for the rights and privileges of journalists and citizens of India".

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Ramanand Sagar
Film & T.V. Producer-Director (1980)
"Even today when Lala Mulk Raj Saraf is 86, his pen has the same flow and vigour which neither shivers nor slows down in defending the truth. His "Meri Pakistan Yatra" is a travelogue with a difference, it takes us along the highways of brotherhood of man and through the innermost recesses of the hearts".

Krishan Chander, Story-writer (1976)
"Though a Saraf (by caste), Lala Mulk Raj Saraf has cared neither for gold, nor silver. He has always believed in the golden glitter of words. I consider myself a member of the 'Ranbir' family. It will not be an exaggeration to say that 'Ranbir' had a hand in lighting up my figure as a story-writer during my formative years in Poonch".

Rana Jung Bahadur Singh
Ex-Editor, 'Times of India' (1966)
"I recall with pleasure and pride my long and close association with you in our professional work and activities from Lahore to Helsinki and onward – we have traveled a memorable distance together".

Ranbir Singh, Chief Editor 'Milap' (1980)
"His pen is as vigorous even today as it was sixty years ago".

Devadas Gandhi, President All India Newspaper Editor Conference (1949)
"I congratulate 'Ranbir', the well-known nationalist daily, on its having completed 25 years of useful service".

Tushar Kanti Ghosh,
Editor 'Amrita Bazar Patrika' (1974)
"He has made valuable contributions to our freedom struggle and national reconstruction as a veteran journalist".

G. Kasturi, Editor 'Hindu'
"Our congratulations and good wishes on his birthday".

M Chalapathi Rau, Editor 'National Herald'
"I felicitate Lala Mulk Raj Saraf on his long service to journalism".

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Khushwant Singh, Editor 'Hindustan Times'
"I am glad to associate with felicitations to him on his 80th birthday".

G.A. Ashai, Kashmiri intellectual
"I know how amidst difficulties and adverse conditions 'Ranbir' continued to serve unstintedly to give support to the progressive voice of the people".

Ram Nath Shastri (Padma Shri)
"He is an historical personage symbolizing a saga of untiring dedication as a pioneer journalist".

Prof. Kundal Lal, Ex-Editor 'Rattan' (1966)
"Countless people, journalists and non-journalists, young and old, regardless of barriers of age, sex, colour and creed, found in him a true friend, philosopher and guide of a very high character".

Mr. Ghulam Mohd Sufi
Editor 'Srinagar Times' (1980)
"His book 'My pilgrimage to Pakistan' convincingly shows that common Pakistanis are also good. Sincere and loving people and not a fanatic or narrow-minded lot".

Ganga Nath Sharma
Ex-Joint Editor 'Ranbir' (1949)
"The callousness of the officialdom, the resistance by reactionaries, the lack of interest in newspaper-reading, the non-existence of any source of collecting and sending news, the paucity of writers and scribes – these were enough to unnerve the determination of any experienced editor. But Lala Mulk Raj Saraf bravely faced all this and came out with flying colours".

Dr. S.S. Nishat
(Ex-Editor "Rattan")
Kashmir Trade Agent in Bombay (1949)
"The Ranbir has brought forth in lime-light many big and small personalities, I myself being the smallest among them. Due to his farsightedness and uprightness Lala Mulk Raj Saraf has always had a deep vision of the future".

G.L. Dogra
Long-time Finance Minister, J&K
"As Chairman of Abhinandan Committee (set up to felicitate him on completing 80 years) I feel very happy to recall how he would encourage me both as a writer and a political activist. He once even

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got me appointed as Editor of a local Urdu weekly 'Kisan'. To my good luck his mature advice continues to be freely available to me."

I.K. Gujral, Ex-Union, Minister (1987)
"There are few personalities in the media world who can credibly rival his dedicated innings. He firmly stood by the nation in most trying days of imperial rule further compounded by the feudal order in J&K. As he defies age and with remarkable agility nears his 93rd birthday, I offer my humble greetings to him".

Dr. Siddheshwar Verma
President, Linguistic Society of India (1949)
"When generation hence the history of J&K will be written, 'Ranbir' will certainly be characterized as one of the makers of J&K".

Maulana Zafar Ali
Editor 'Zamindar' Lahore (1942)
"He deservers much praise that despite many difficulties and obstacles in the Princely States, he has conducted himself successfully as an editor."

Mahashay Krishan
Editor 'Pratap' Lahore (1942)
"I have nothing but praise for him for the way he has crossed hurdles and made 'Ranbir' a success".

Prem Nath Bazaz, Journalist (1942)
"The 'Ranbir' has contributed its due share in making J&K progress so far. Its inoffensive policy, its non-communal approach and consistency are commendable."

Prem Nath Pardesi
Kashmiri story-writer (1949)
"In fact I owe my literary career to the Ranbir".

Abdul Qadus Rasa Jawdani (1949)
"The poet in me for his development owes much to the encouragement extended to me by him through 'Ranbir' and 'Rattan".

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Salma Siddiquie (1985)
"His pen symbolizes the strength of his rocky homeland and the rhythm of its river Tawi".

Brijmohan Dattatrya 'Kafi' (1937)
"I wonder whether to prefer 'Ranbir' to 'Rattan' or the latter to the former. Both are unique. The whole Urdu world should be grateful to you".

Al Ahmed Saroor
Writer and critic (1986)
"Lala Mulk Raj Saraf who rightly deserves the title of Baba-e-Urdu of J&K, will be counted amongst the epoch making personalities in the cultural, journalistic and literary annals of the State".

Mohd Yousuf Taing
Secretary Cultural Academy J&K (1986)
"The 'Rattan' was children's best and most attractive journal of the Urdu world during 1934-47. Even today in the glare of advancing technology very few magazines of that eminence are to be seen. It lighted up my childhood, too, like that of thousands of other infants".

R. K. Kak, Journalist (1949)
"The steadfastness, uprightness and fearlessness with which he served the national cause set up a very high standard of journalism".

Abdul Samad Wani
Editor 'Kasheer' Rawalpindi (1987)
"His outstanding service to the Urdu language in Jammu—the core of Dogra Desh, will always be remembered".

Mr. A.G. Mast Faridi
Ex-Minister J&K & Editor 'Taqweem' (1986)
"His universal recognition as doyen of Indian journalism is also clear vindication of urdu as a powerful medium. His love for Urdu is as vigorous today as it was early this century. His eminence as 'Baba-e-Urdu' as well as 'Baba-e-Sahafat' in J&K is undoubted".

J.N. Zutshi, Ex-Director General
Information & Broadcasting J&K (1974)
"I must confess today that after I myself-became a victim of the 'Chief Minister's version' in 1953 I realised how important even a single voice of dissent is to the functioning of true democracy.

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It was the irrepressible and dissenting Lala Mulk Raj Saraf who raised a protest against my illegal detention and the detention of some of my colleagues".

Kalim Akhtar
Journalist, Lahore (1988)
"His unblemished character is the reason why he is held in great esteem by his compatriots both in India and Pakistan".

Munshi Meraj-ud-Din Ahmed
Editor "Pasban' Sailkot (1980)
"Lala Mulk Raj Saraf's heart always pulsated with deep affection for his compatriots and noble sentiments for their well being".

Ram Lal
Urdu Writer, Lucknow (1982)
"I found his travelogue "Insaniyat Abhi Zindah Hai' so highly absorbing that I finished reading it in one go. It was impossible to get away from it even for a moment".

B.P. Sharma, Journalist
"I feel proud I learnt the ABC of journalism at the feet of Lala Mulk Raj Saraf who appointed me as a correspondent of 'Ranbir' in 1927 when I was a student of Sri Pratap High School, Srinagar".

G.M. Sadiq
Chief Minister (1964-71)
'He has not only been pioneer in the field of journalism but also a distinguished publicman and has always maintained a high standard of behaviour".

Syed Mir Qasim
Chief Minister (1971-75)
"He has always followed the dictates of conscience without bias or fear and thus set up a worthy example for others to pursue".

G.M. Shah
Chief Minister (1984-86)
"The 'Ranbir' not only made full contribution in creating social and political consciousness but also played a laudable role in the growth of Urdu literature while upholding the best of human and journalistic values".

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Bakshi Ghulam Mohd
PrimeMinister J&K (1953-63)
"He occupies a unique position in journalism with a chain of achievements to his credit".

Dr. Farooq Abdullah
Chief Miniser (1987)
"Lala Mulk Raj Saraf is more than mere 'Father of Journalism' in Jammu and Kashmir. His pioneering role both as an editor and a staunch freedom fighter is well-known. My Father (Sheikh Mohd Abdullah) had always held him in great esteem for his many qualities of head and heart".

Col. E.J.D. Colvin
Prime Minister J&K (1932-37)
"His outlook is liberal and he appears to have properly understood the true responsibility of a journalist serving the State and the people in a commendable manner".

Sir Maharaj Singh (Ex-Prime Minister J&K)
Governor Maharashtra (1949)
"On the occasion of the its Silver Jubilee I have much pleasure in sending my good wishes to 'Ranbir'".

Major General Dewan Bishan Dass
Ex-Chief Minister (1949)
"By dint of his determination and ability he made the impossible possible. He has set up an excellent record of selfless service to the country worthy of emulation".

Bhagwan Sahay
Governor J&K (1967-73)
"His intellectual vigour and his energy to do something which can be of lasting value to society, is a feature of his life which it is impossible not to admire."

Mr. Jagmohan
Governor J&K (1989)
"Lala Mulk Raj Saraf set up a high standard of journalism during his 70 years' long career which rightly earned him the title of 'Father of Journalism'. His death has caused a great void in our social life which will be difficult to be filled.".

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Major-General Samunder Khan (1942)
" 'Ranbir' has fought and won many a battle in the field of social reforms' ".

Brig. Bakshi Udey Chand (1949)
"Lala Mulk Raj Saraf may rightly feel proud that 'Ranbir' has been carrying aloft the motto of 'suffer and serve' ".

D.P. Dhar, Ex-Deputy Chairman
Planning Commission of India
" 'Ranbir' always maintained the highest tradition of Journalism'.

J.N. Bhan, Vice Chancellor,
University of Jammu (1971)
"The University of Jammu is indeed very grateful to Lala Mulk Raj Saraf for parting with his precious possession of master files of 'Ranbir' and his other publications and presenting it to the University of Jammu for the pursuit of academic research".

Om Mehta
Ex-Minister of State, India
"Apart from being a pioneer in the field of journalism in J&K he has been a well-known freedom fighter and staunch supporter of fundamental human rights".

Yash Pal, Ex-Minister Punjab
"He played a prominent role as a fearless champion of right causes".

Wazir Ganga Ram
Home and Education Minister J&K (1942)
"I personally know with what pleasurable inclination Maharaja Pratap Singh used to get 'Ranbir' read out to him regularly".

Dr. K.G. Salyidain
Educational Advisor, India
"Only papers like 'Ranbir' could guide masses to distinguish between right and wrong".

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Lala Har Dayal, revolutionary (1924)
"The birth of 'Ranbir' is a significant event in the history of the Indian (Princely) States".

Munshi Mohd Din 'Fauq' (1924)
'A Saraf (Jeweller) alone could dive out a valuable pearl like 'Ranbir' from a region like J&K".

Mr. D.N. Saraf, U.N. Adviser Cottage and Small Industries (1989)
"He (my uncle) believed in and practiced introduction of spiritual values in life – truthfulness, straight forwardness, fellow-feeling and selfless service. I have seen him regularly praying two times, morning and evening, some times talking to Him, the Creator, Like an innocent child".

Mr. K.K. Nayyar, Ex-Deputy Director General Doordarshan (1991)
"Very few journalists could claim the sense of dedication and missionary zeal that earned him the highest esteem of his fraternity. It was my proud privilege to know him".

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VIEWS & REVIEWS

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Publisher's Note

"FIFTY YEARS AS A JOURNALIST" by Shri Mulk Raj Saraf has been hailed all over the country. The comments on the book are still pouring in. Its First Edition is almost out of stock. We now intend to bring out its second Edition.

Hereafter are given excerpts from some of the opinions expressed by the intelligentsia and the comments made in the press.

Raj Mahal Publishers,
Durbar Garh Road,
Jammu & Kashmir State (India)

Jammu,
April 20, 1968

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Rashtrapati Bhavan,
New Delhi.
March 19, 1968

Dear Shri Mulk Raj Saraf,

I am grateful to you for your kind thought in having sent me your book 'Fifty Years As A Journalist'. I have glanced through it. Indeed it makes interesting reading.

With best wishes,

Your Sincerely,
Zakir Husain

Shri Bhagwan Sahay
Governor,
Jammu & Kashmir State

Shri Mulk Raj Saraf has arrived at an honoured position in the contemporary life of Jammu and Kashmir State through five decades of endeavour in promoting and fostering the urges of his people to find their own identity and its broader relationship with the national personality. His field of endeavour has been mainly journalism and in this simple record of fifty years of his life we get a vivid picture not only of the man but also of the times in which he lived. Honest autobiographies are always useful in the interpretation and understanding of historical events.

Throughout the ages our country has lacked this category of writing, a trend, which, also, is still continuing. I feel that Shri Mulk Raj Saraf deserves to be congratulated for the lively account of his life that he has published; the account is valuable not only for the simplicity of his style and veracity of his facts but also for the light that it throws on the influences that moulded the life of this good, wise and honourable man and on the many events that have contributed to the present complex situation of this State.

Shri K. K. Shah
Union Minister for
Information & Broadcasting
Government of India.

The Press in India has survived many difficult vicissitudes. Shri Saraf's account of his long journalistic career amply proves that journalism in India in its early beginning was not a profession, but a courageous mission. Shri Saraf narrates a number of incidents from his life which go to show the strength of his moral fibre and his courage to face adversities which arise out of free and fearless expression of one's own views.

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In British India, as well as in the Princely States, Journalists had to take up the brief of the people. I am particularly glad to see that Ranbir, founded by Shri Saraf, had also social and economic perspsective. In those days, it advocated eradication of corruption, removal of rural indebtedness and abolition of forced labour.

Shri Saraf's book will serve as a reference book of the struggle for freedom of Press in Jammu and Kashmir State. It also gives an insight into the political history of Kashmir State. I hope Shri Saraf's simple, and dedicated life will inspire and motivate young journalists. It is now necessary to describe to the new generation the hardships and hurdles which the fighters of the country had faced during the trying and long struggle of independence. I am sure this book will reconstruct for the readers this momentous period of history of freedom struggle in Kashmir.

.....

Justic J. R. Madholkar
Chairman
Press Council of India

I have gone through Shri Mulk Raj Saraf's autobiography "Fifty Years As A Journalist". As the founder-editor of the first newspaper published in Jammu and Kashmir, the author has a rich store of recollections of men and matters of that State covering a period well over half a century. The book not only deals with the efforts and achievements of a pioneer in journalism in Jammu and Kashmir but also presents an account of many important events which have a bearing on the contemporary history of that State. New entrants to the profession will, I hope, benefit from the experiences of the author; students interested in affairs of the State will find it a useful source of reference material.

.....

Mr. Ghulam Mohd Mir Rajpori
Speaker Legislative Assembly,
Jammu & Kashmir,

'Fifty Years As A Journalist' makes a fascinating reading. Mr. Saraf appears on the scene as a sturdy youngster from the town of Samba.

His battle against odds reminds me of powerful personalities of the world who has a similar humble beginning but, the potentialities of their mind and body carried them to very high positions of power and popularity. Mr. Saraf launched his genius in the vaccum and absence of enlightenment in the Jammu and

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Kashmir State. He founded the first Newspaper in the State. Had he moved in wider atmosphere of friction and struggle, who knows, he could have been a prodigy in the glaxy of national heroes. His steadfastness and dedication seem to me a quality of rare value. He has not properly rated his capabilities by fixing a modest target of founding a newspaper in the State. Perhaps he was destined for a more pervasive performance. His story operates as a lamp-post for ordinary people to construct their life along the lines of saga and human service. His appearance today, is beaming with confidence. At the age of 75 he symbolizes substance in an excellent form.

.....

Shri R. R. Diwaker, M.P.
Formerly Union Minister of
Information and Broadcasting,
Chairman,
Gandhi Memorial Trust, New Delhi.

I have commended "FIFTY YEARS AS A JOURNALIST" to my staff on "Samyukta Karnatak".

I think it is not only a Journalist's career but also of a brave and conscientious fighter for the rights and privileges of Journalists and citizens of India.

S. Murtza Fazl Ali
Chief Justice
Jammu & Kashmir High Court

The book provides a very interesting reading and traces the evolution and growth of journalism in the State in a very scientific fashion. The author who appears to be a born journalist has clearly brought out the troubles and tribulations, the difficulties and obstacles and the ups and downs which he had to face in bringing out the first newspaper of the State. While tracing the history of journalism in the State, the author has also given us a good idea of the vicissitudes and revolutions through which the State passed over the years. The book is indeed a treat for the intelligentsia.

.....

Dr. K. G. Saiyidain
Formerly Union Education Secretary,
Director, Asian Institute of
Educational Planning and Administration,
Government of India.

I have been moved by this saga of journalistic effort. People are often apt to forget the difficulties and trials that all pioneers have to face, although they live in the cool shade of their efforts. Mr. Saraf

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has been such a pioneer in the field of journalism to have followed a consistently national and broad-minded policy. It must be a source of great satisfaction to him-as it is to his many friends-that he can look back upon fifty years of honest work, motivated by high principles in a profession which does not particularly favour either integrity or high principles.

.....

Doctor J. N. Bhan
Pro-Vice Chancellor,
University of Jammu & Kashmir.

The Raj Mahal Publishers, Jammu deserve the credit for this excellent production, with its very attractive printing, get-up, paper, design and other technical aspects of presentation. Such a publication of a high quality is a new thing in the State.

The author's struggle for starting the first independent newspaper in the State should serve as an inspiration to all those who follow the journalistic profession. Through the medium of the Ranbir Mr. Saraf has rendered a great service towards the cause of the democratic evolution in our State.

Jystice H. N. Bhat
Judge High Court,
Jammu & Kashmir.

Shri Mulk Raj Saraf's book "FIFTY YEARS AS A JOURNALIST" should not be construed as an individual's autobiography but a history of the growth of journalism in the State.

The book depicts this evolutionary process through the life, with its successes and failures, achievements and set-backs, of a dauntless fighter, a steadfast truth-seeker and a man of strong convictions and puritan character, whose life ambition has been to set up a free press and foster this Fourth Estate at any cost and sacrifice.

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Lala Durga Dass, *Managing Director*
India News & Feature Alliance,
New Delhi.

The book is a welcome addition to the scrabby material available on the evolution of politics in Jammu and Kashmir.

Shri Ranbir Singh
President All India Newspaper
Editors conference.

I am greatly impressed with Shri Mulk Raj Saraf's "Fifty Years As A Journalist". The book aptly portrays the trials and turmoils of a pioneer journalist. It is a saga of courage set against grave threats and easy temptations.

Shri Abdul Gani Goni
Minister af State for Finance,
Jammu & Kashmir

It is a valuable record of history viewed from the angle of a pioneer in journalism whose sole object is to present the march of events over a span of time in a totally dispassionate manner. I feel that every person connected with and interested in the affairs of this State should make it a point to read this book.

Shri Mohd Din Bandey
Deputy Minister for Information
J & K State.

To go through the book is an opportunity for the young to receive inspiration and sense of determination. Journalism is an art, an endeavour and above all an image of the society it represents and Mr. Saraf has done it all in a most commendable way.

Shri Ramanand Sagar
Film Writer,
Producer and Director, Bombay

It is a rare experience to read such a book in which the life of a person reflects the hostory of his land. The frank, vivid and gripping story of Lala Mulk Raj Saraf's adventurous life and brilliant career has a romantic back drop of the people of a feudal Indiae State like Kashmir, struggling against an autocratic system of Government, and ultimately winning their democratic rights till they could also share the political freedom of India – their mother country.

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Shri Vir Sen Sawhny
Advocate, Supreme Court, New Delhi.

A mine of valuable information and is highly absorbing reading. It is a model of dispassionate objectivity.

Professor Ishwar Dass Mengi
Jammu.

The book depicts in a simple style the hardships which the author had to face and overcome to realise his ambition as a journalist. It should be in the hands of every young man to inspire him with zeal to reach heights which ambitious young persons are desirous of attaining.

Dr. (Miss) Krishna Mohan
Principal, Government College for Women, Jammu.

"FIFTY YEARS AS A JOURNLIST" is a document of historical importance replete with useful and interesting material. The youth can learn much from the varied and valuable experiences of the author who occupies a prominent position in the public life of the State.

Professor Kundan Lal,
New Delhi

As an autobiography the book is simple, sincere and expressive. Equally it is an authentic and throbbing record of the events and personalities which have shaped the history of Jammu and Kashmir State in the last 50 years, and to which the author has himslef contributed in no slight a measure.

Shri T. C. Wazir
Director of Industries & Commerce (Rtd.),
President, Women's Welfare Trust.
Kashmir.

Being almost of the same age as the author. I have been an eye-witness to the events narrated by Shri Mulk Raj Saraf and have been greatly impressed by the tenacity of purpose, application to work and loftiness of idealism which inspired and informed his career throughout as a journalist.

Shri Bansi Lal Suri
Advocate,
Jammu

The book not only provides autobiographic accouts of journalism in the State but also is best suited to be a chronicle of its political and developmental history for the past half a century based on authentic records and archives.

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Shri Uma Shanker
Hindi Writer and Author,
New Delhi.

The language used and the method adopted are highly commendable. The whole matter has been presented in such an excellant manner that once taken in hand, it becomes impossible to leave the book unfinished; it is so interesting and absorbing.

Shri Kidar Nath Shastri,
New Delhi.

The book brings before our mind's eye the vivid picture of the memorable events that shaped the destiny of the State in the critical period of its history. Shri Saraf's noble ambition to graft the tender plant of journalism in the state and his subsequent efforts to foster it with parental care in the face of stubborn obstructions and obscrantism comprise a momorable chapter of his autobiography. True to his profession to the core, and without caring for favours or forwns, he served journalism with devotion and spirit of nationalism with singular success. His vide travels in foreign lands have enriched his knowledge of men and matters and made him a versatile journalist.

Shri N. D. Parimoo
Principal (Retired).

This book reveals the personality of the writer, a true son of the soil and an honest journalist who has fought many a battle to uphold truth and has won in the long run.

Professor (Miss) Shushma Choudhary,
Jammu.

An informative useful publication which enlightents the younger people on the contemporary history of the State.

Statesman, New Delhi
August 26,01967.
(A pre-publication Review).

A veteran Journalist is publishing his book of memoris. Mr. Mulk Raj Saraf, 73, has completed 50 years of journalism. Mr. Saraf was the first individual to seek permission to start a newspaper in a princely State in Northern India. His "unprecedented" request was greeted by some kind of a horrified refusal by the then Maharaja of Kashmir. But, after a fight lasting four years, Mr. Saraf won his battle and brought out the first newspaper in Kashmir. Since

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then both the State and Mr. Saraf have come a long way, and the story of the intervening years is told by Mr. Saraf in a book, the foreword of which has been written by Mr. Sadiq, the present Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir.

Hindustan Times, New Delhi
November 5, 1967.
(Overseas Edition, November 11, 1967).

REMINISCENCES OF A JOURNALIST

Mr. Saraf has the distinction of having started Ranbir, the first newspaper in Jammu and Kashmir in 1924. In this book he gives a lively account of the obstacles in the way of this venture and of the persistence and resourcefulness with which he overcame official reluctance to permit its coming into being. The official attitude was one of suspicion that this may be the thin-end of the edge of what they most feared : the importation of sedition from British India.

In its early years, Ranbir, which was a weekly then, was therefore, careful to avoid getting tangled up with official displeasure, even though this was not easy when it concerned itself mainly with social issues. Later, clashes with authority were even more inevitable when in the thirties the rest of India was swept over by great nationalist fervour and some of it spilled over into Kashmir.

Nearly a quarter of a century later, Ranbir bore witness to the stirring events that eventually led to Kashmir's accession to India. The book throws interesting light on some of the little known incidents of the period.

Hindu, Madras
December 31, 1967

PERILOUS PROFESSION

Half-a-century in Indian journalism under any condition would be a record worthy of appreciative recognition; especially commendable is it in the case of an author who successfully maintained journalistic standards that brought him into conflict with the executive in Kashmir. Mr. Mulk Raj Saraf had the great advantage of having served his apprenticeship under a craftsman of high integrity and skill, Lala Lajpat Rai, as a sub-editor on the staff of his Urdu daily in Lahore, Bande Mataram. The perils of running a paper in an Indian State are apparent from the author's accounts of his encounters with successive Prime Ministers, both before Kashmir's accession to India and in the subsequent years. Much of the narrative is of purely local and even ephemeral interest; but there are several

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episodes that throw light on the rapidly changing developments in the State during the last two decades. The author's willingness to face executive displeasure, even to the point of closing down his paper under certain circumstances, is in keeping with the highest standards of Indian journalism.

The Tribune, Ambala
December 10, 1967

FOURTH ESTATE

A sad day it was when on May 18, 1950 J & K's first and foremost daily. 'Ranbir' put up shutters. The closure was forced by the hostility of the State Government headed by Sheikh Abdullah, who had himself risen to power with the aid of this paper. Along with its sister publication, Rattan, it had a dazzling record of public service but both came to grief (at the hands of a hero they had built up) owing to the missionary zeal, humanitarian outlook and high journalistic ethics of their proprietor-editor, Lala Mulk Raj Saraf.

At 73 the oldest living journalist of J & K, M R S occupies a place of dignity in the public life of his State because of the battles he fought and won for the emancipation of the Fourth Estate and eradication of tyranny from the State. A leader of the protest thought he is popularly called " the father of journalism in J & K", "the G.O.M. of the profession" and "the Patriarch of a whole family of working journalists". For five decades he has been an observer and recorder of public events and a mentor of State politics.

In this gripping memoir revolving round his career as an editor and reporter, M R S takes in a broad sweep the whole panorama of 50 years of public life in his State. With enviable economy of words and without losing his sense of humility, he relates the transformation of J & K from autocracy to democracy thus making a valuable contribution to historical record. It is inspiring to know that journalists worthy of their name remain seadfast in the face of threats and temptations.

"Pioneer" Lucknow
Jan., 1968

A JOURNALIST LOOKS BACK

PROFUSELY illustrated and well-printed this excellent autobiography has indeed given an intimate and succinct account of the outstanding work and achievements of Mr. Mulk Raj Saraf, who is very justifiably regarded as the father of journalism in Jammu and Kashmir State.

The journalistic experiences and reminiscences that Mr. Saraf has so very realistically described in this book are indeed invaluable and note worthy for all

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young and aspiring journalists of this country. There is no doubt at all that they will provide very inspiring reading material to all those who are interested in Indian journalism and wish to profit from the mature thinking and ideas as expressed by an experienced journalist of Mr. Saraf's standing.

Dr. Karan Singh former Governor of Jammu and Kashmir State and at present Union Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation has contributed a significant Introduction to this book.

"Thought", Delhi
October 14, 1967

A SEASONED JOURNALIST

There are not many men who at 73 can look back into 50 years of their professional life and sigh with deep contentment for having lived a life meaningful and fulfilled. Mr. Mulk raj Saraf is one who does. His book *'Fifty Years As A journalist'* is witness to it. It is a testament to not only the dedicated and devoted life to journalism but also to the saga of the birth and growth of Press in a Princely State.

Mulk Raj Saraf, has set down the record of his fifty years in journalism with an unusual naivety and singular economy of expression – the hall-mark of a good journalist – his life, the experiences. his failures and success, his dreams and his mission in life.

He talks of the pre-partition conditions in the State without bitterness, of the post-partition nightmare dispassionately, of the invasion, the maharaja's request to India for accession and military aid, of coming to power of Sheikh Abdullah and then rise and fall of three Prime Ministers, the political intrigues and motivated deceits and communal wrangles with the detached clarity and precision of a hardened journalist.

He tells us of the times when a reporter could be locked up or externed from the State Capital without being told why; when reporters were made scapegoats for the sins of the administrators, when the newspaper editors were ordered to have all their stories censored in the pre-Independence days and also of the Prime Ministers threatening, cajoling, bribing the newspaper editors to toe their line and when the police authorities were told to involve in criminal cases the editors with independent voice in the post-Independence era.

Closing down of the Ranbir that had progressed from a weekly to the State's first daily, by sheikh Abdullah whom Mulk Raj Saraf had supported in his days of struggle indeed, was a sad event. But it also proved incidentally that the independent voice of the Press cannot be bought by its own created heroes.

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Daily Milap, New Delhi
March 17,1968.

A unique publication vividly describing how journalism took its birth in a princely State in Northern India. The book has been highly praised by the entire Indian Press and rightly acclaimed among the literary circles. Journalists of today can learn much from the experiences of the able author.

Nav Bharat Times (Hindi Daily), New Delhi
January 16, 1968

The autobiography vividly relates the great struggle that the author had to conduct for bringing into being the first newspaper of the Jammu and Kashmir State.

"Aaina" Srinagar
November 5, 1967

A BIBLE FOR THE JOURNALISTS

Although it is the autobiography of the first newspaper "The Ranbir" and its creator, yet Shri Mulk Raj Saraf's innocent honesty has made it an authentic history of the political, social and journalistic life in the State. Those who know Shri Saraf only as a journalist, cannot in reality gauge his greatness and his historic role; he is an intrepid fighter, an unconquerable force, a many-sided personality and a matchless journalist. He is in fact a walking history.

Shri Saraf's personality is an institution and a beacon.

Apart from its great historic merit "Fifty Years As A Journalist" is a laudable addition to the modern biographical literature. This book has all the three sterling qualities of high class poetry as stressed by the great poet Maulana Hali viz simplicity, truthfulness and warmth.

The Saturday Digest, New Delhi
September 2, 1967.
(A pre-publication Review).

What Mr. Saraf writes in his book is not only the story of his life but the history of the growth of journalism in Princely States in Northern India and the history of Jammu and Kashmir State itself during the crucial 1917-1967 period. During his long and eventful career Mr Saraf had to face innumerable hurdles in the way of free expression of opinion. Most of these hurdles he managed to cross because of his devotion to the cause of journalism. For this, he paid the price in the shape of various periods of confinements, closure of his paper and confiscation of his property. Success or failure, from every test he came out with flying colours.

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Not only did Mr. Saraf fight against the autocratic rule, but also against all sorts of social injustices and prejudices.

Qaumi Awaz (Daily), Jammu
October 28, 1967.

A saga of journalism starting from the days when voice for publishing a newspaper in the Jammu and Kashmir State was considered an upardonable sin. The book recounts the doings of a daring and determined journalist who overcame numerous hardships by dint of his manly and ceaseless struggle. Not only that but he also blazed the trail in the field of journalism for many a youngman who later rose to enviable positions.

Daily Ujala, Jammu
December 5, 1967

This book has undoubtedly created a stir in the world of journalism. Not to speak of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, few books in the country can come up to this volume in attractive and sizzling get-up.

Daily "Pratap" Jallundur
November 27, 1967

A splendid volume with excellent get up hailed as an authentic history of journalism and politics in Jammu and Kashmir State.

A MISSIONARY

The Autobiography of Shri Mulk Raj Saraf gives a vivid picture of the struggle which the author had to go through before he reached his goal. He is hardworking, honest and a man of strong convictions. He worked as a missionary regardless of any temptations. These are the qualities which account for his success. Although the book is not an exhaustive chronicle of the Jammu and Kashmir State, yet it depicts the different stages of reforms which took place in the State. It further shows how the auther laid the foundation of journalism in the State and how gradually it progressed and reached the present stage. That is why Shri Saraf, the author, has been affectionately known as the father of journalism in Jammu and Kashmir State. People interested in journalism and in the history of our State will find interesting material in this book for their study.

Shri Janki Nath Wazir
Acting Governor
(Chief Justice Jammu & Kashmir High Court.)

Jammu,
April 10, 1967.

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HIGH STANDARD OF MORAL RECTITUDE

Reading through this book recalls the years of endeavours, of despairs, of hopes and of trials which the author's generation faced during the first half of the twentieth century. The author sketches the life of the Ranbir, the first newspaper in Jammu and Kashmir. The urge which drove him to undertake the venture and the high standard of moral rectitude which he maintained are typical of the journalists school to which he belonged. The fact of the Ranbir having been published in an Indian State only shows that the struggle for freedom was catholic and not confind to what was then called British India.

The book with its comments on the persons and events will always find a welcome place on the tables of those engaged in the comparative study of India as it is today.

M. A. Ansari
(Retired Chief Justice, Kerala High Court),
Chairman, Anti-Corruption Commission,
Jammu & Kashmir State.

Jammu
May 12, 1967

A FORCE IN CREATING PUBLIC OPINION

It is a well written and well produced autobiography of Mr. Mulk Raj Saraf, the father of journalism in the Jammu and Kashmir State. He struggled hard to persuade the then autocratic regime of the State to permit him to publish the first newspaper, Ranbir, on June 1924. It soon became a leader of thought, a force in creating public opinion. RANBIR was a newspaper forever unsatisfied with merely printing news – forever fighting every form of wrong – forever independent – forever wedded to true democratic ideas – forever aspiring to be a moral force. RANBIR fought many a battle and fought fearlessly. Saraf wielded his mighty pen to get the autocratic regime replaced by a democratic set up. Strangely enough Saraf's RANBIR fell a victim to the methods adopted by the new democratic regime to stifle its voice. RANBIR finaly closed down on May 18, 1950 and refused to barter away the freedom of the Press.

Mr. Saraf's autobiography is a brief history of Journalism of the Jammu and Kashmir State, a short political history of the territory, and an intimate life-sketch of the grand old man, who gave birth to journalism in a land where it was a sin and crime to even think of or apply for permission to publish a newspaper. The book contains a mine of information and is well authenticated. It is a welcome contribution from a veteran journalist.

P. P. Singh
M.A. (Mo.), J.D.(Lond.), L.L.B.
Head of the Department of Journalism
Punjab University

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"THE RANBIR" has been leader of thought in many matters and I testify that many dreams it has dreamt, have come true."

Sheikh Mohd. Abdullah
Prime Minister,
J & K State

10-6-49.

"When generations hence the story of Jammu and Kashmir will be written, the 'RANBIR' will certainly be characterized as one of the makers of Jammu and Kashmir.

Prof. Dr. Siddheshwar Verma
Editor, the Great English Indian Dictionary,
Ex-President, the Linguistic Society of India.

It was in 1920, during the days of Maharaja Pratap singh when a serious attempt was made to start a Weekly Newspaper in the Jammu & Kashmir State. The young pioneer in this field was Mulk Raj Saraf, who is now known as the "Grand old man" of the profession in the State, by virtue of his being the oldest living Journalist. At the same time, he presides over a whole family of working journalists. Mulk Raj Saraf had earlier been associated with the "Bande Matram" an Urdu Daily of Lahore which was started by Lala Lajpat Rai."

(Excerpt from a feature article published by the Press Information Bureau, Government of India, on September 5, 1963)

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ACCESSION OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR STATE – HISTORICAL & LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

by

Adarsh Sein Anand, Chairman National Human Rights Commission and former Chief Justice of India. First person from J&K to hold these two coveted posts.

Geographically, pre-October 1947, the State of Jammu and Kashmir fell into four natural regions. In the South lies Jammu, the winter capital of the State; in the centre is the valley of Kashmir, which contains the summer capital, Srinagar, to the north is Gilgit and between the Kashmir Valley and Tibet is the province of Ladakh. The State covered an area of 84,471 square miles and included Gilgit, areas in POK, Kashmir Valley, Ladakh and Jammu. At present, almost 50 percent of the area is not under the control of the Government of Jammu and Kashmir – it is under occupation of Pakistan or China.

The Indian native States, of which the state of Jammu and Kashmir was one such state, were those areas in the Indian subcontinent, which were for internal purposes outside the administrative, legislative and judicial sphere of the British Indian Government. Each such State had a hereditary ruler, who, subject to the paramountcy of the British Crown, exercised, with some exceptions, unlimited power over the State ruled by them. These native States covered more than half the area of the Indian subcontinent and were referred to as Indian India. The other part of India comprising the provinces and certain other areas was referred to as British India. The rulers of the native States were sovereign subject to the paramountcy of the British Crown. On her assumption of direct rule in India in 1858, the Queen Empress through a proclamation declared to the native princes of India that all treaties and engagements made with them by or under the authority of the East India Company would be honoured and scrupulously maintained and that the rights, dignity and honour of native princes would be maintained.

The aftermath of the Second World War and the assumption of power by a Labour Ministry in England, brought about a change in the British policy towards India. The Secretary of State for India, Lord Pethick Lawrence announced on 19.2.1946 the decision of the British Government to send a delegation of three Cabinet Ministers

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to India to find a solution for the problem of India. The delegation popularly known as "Cabinet Mission" arrived in India on 23.3.1946. On 25.5.1946 the Cabinet Mission circulated a memorandum dated 12.5.1946 in regard to the native States. In this memorandum the mission affirmed that on the withdrawal of British Government from India, the rights of the States which flowed from their relationship with the crown would no longer be possible to exist and the rights surrendered by the States to the paramount power would revert to the rulers of those States when the two new dominions of India and Pakistan are created. Paragraph 5 of the Memorandum read:

"When a new fully self-governing or independent Government or Governments come into being in British India. His Majesty's Government's influence with these Governments will not be such as to enable them to carry out the obligations of paramountcy. Moreover, they cannot contemplate that British troops would be retained in India for this purpose. Thus, as a logical sequence and in view of the desires expressed to them on behalf of the Indian States, His Majesty's Government will cease to exercise the power of paramountcy. This means that the right of the States which flow from their relationship to the Crown will no longer exist and that all the rights surrendered by the States to the paramount power will return to the States. Political arrangements between the States on the one side and the British Crown and British India on the other will thus be brought to an end. The void will have to be filled either by States entering into a federal relationship with the successor Government or Governments in British India, or failing this, entering into particular political arrangements with it or them."

The Cabinet Mission, however, advised the rulers of the native States to enter into negotiations with the successor Governments and evolve a scheme of the precise form of their relationship. On 20.2.1047, the British Government announced that independence would be granted to British India. This was followed by another statement on 3.6.1947 setting out its plan for the transfer of power. The plan inter alia provided that the Muslim majority areas in British India should constitute the dominion of Pakistan and the Hindu majority areas in British India the dominion of India. In this plan the position of the princely States was dealt with in the following manner:

"His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that the decisions announced above (about partition) relate only to British India and that their policy towards Indian States contained in the Cabinet Mission Memorandum of 12.5.1946. (Cmd. 6835) remains unchanged.

Thus, it would be seen that on the withdrawal of paramountcy, the princely States were to become independent and the communal basis of division of British India was not to apply ipso facto to the States. Neither the Cabinet Mission nor the British Government made any positive suggestions regarding the future of the princely States. The only thing that was made clear was that the sovereignty was to revert to the rulers of these native States. Lord Mountbatten, as the Crown representative, addressed

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the Chamber of Princes on 25.7.1947. He advised the princes and their representatives that although legally they had become independent, they should accede to one or the other dominion, keeping in mind the geographical contiguity of their States. (Keeping's *Contemporary Archives*. 9/16/8/1947, p. 8765). Lord Mountbatten told the Chamber of Princes that accession of the State to either of the dominions was to be under the Cabinet Mission Memorandum of 16.5.1947, which contemplated surrender to the dominion of three subjects, namely, defence, external affairs and communications. Lord Mountbatten also caused to be circulated for discussion a Draft Instrument of Accession, which explicitly provided for surrender to the appropriate dominion the power over the three specified subjects and stated that the dominion would have no authority over the internal autonomy of the State. A State could accede to either dominion by executing an instrument of accession signed by the ruler and accepted by the Governor – General of the dominion concerned. The decision whether to accede or not and to which dominion were in the exclusive right and discretion of the Ruler. In the Indian dominion the accession was to be made under Section 6 of the Government of India Act, 1935 as adopted by Section 9 of the Indian Independence Act. 1947.

On 15.8.1947, India became independent. In accordance with the Cabinet Mission plan of May 1946 following the creation of the dominions of India and Pakistan, Kashmir bordering on both India and Pakistan had, like any other native State, three alternatives, viz., to assert complete independence, to accede to Pakistan or to accede India. Power to take the decision vested exclusively in the ruler according to the British Government's declared policy.

The Quit India Movement in British India had its echo in Kashmir where the National Conference had launched "Quit Kashmir Movement" with renewed vigour from 28.6.1938 demanding that Maharaja Hari Singh should quit the State bag and baggage and leave the people of the State to decide their own future by having a responsible Government. It gained more momentum in 1944. The Maharaja's Government made efforts to crush the "Quit Kashmir Movement". Arrest of political leaders followed. On 15.8.1947 most of the leaders of the National Conference and the Muslim Conference were in prison. The movement, however, did not die. In the absence of British help which the Maharaja was hitherto getting, the Maharaja found himself in a tight corner. "He disliked idea of becoming a part of India, which was being democratized or of Pakistan which was a Muslim State. He thought of independence". (Brown, W.N., *The United States and India and Pakistan*, Cambridge 1953, p. 162). He therefore offered to sign a standstill agreement with both India and Pakistan aimed at continuing the existing relationship pending his final decision regarding the future of the State.

No standstill agreement came to be concluded between Kashmir and India though the Foreign Secretary to the Government of Pakistan on 15.8.1947 indicated to the Maharaja that the Government of Pakistan was agreeable to have a standstill agreement with the Government of Jammu & Kashmir. It

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was followed by the visit of Private Secretary to Mr. Jinnah to Srinagar and *"His highness was told that he was an independent sovereign, that he alone had the power to give accession; that he need consult nobody, that he should not care for the National Conference or Sheikh Abdullah, . . that he need not delegate any of his powers to the people of the State and that Pakistan would not touch a hair of his head or take away an iota of his power"* If he acceded to Pakistan. [Mahajan, M.C., *Accession of Kashmir to India (The Inside Story)*, sholapur, p. 2]. In the second week of August, however, there occurred a Poonch revolt, against the authority of the Maharaja. The State Government found that the revolt in Poonch was due to infiltration from Pakistan but the charge was refuted by Pakistan Government. On the other hand Pakistan Government charged the Government of Jammu & Kashmir with attacking Muslim villages in the State. (*White paper on Jammu and Kashmir*, New Delhi, 1948, Documents, Part 1, pp. 6-15). At the same time there started an economic blockade from Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan did not unequivocally deny the charge of economic blockade but pleaded "special circumstances" and difficulties in sending supplies to the State due to reluctance of the drivers of lorries to carry the supplies between Rawalpindi and Kohala. While the Pakistan Government was pleading "special circumstances", *Dawn*, the Muslim League's official organ, wrote on 24.8.1947, *"the time has come to tell the Maharaja of Kashmir that he must make his choice and choose Pakistan."* Should Kashmir fail to join Pakistan, *"the gravest possible trouble would inevitably ensue"*. This threat alarmed the Maharaja of Kashmir. Looking to the upsurge in the State, Sheikh Abdullah who was in jail was released on 29.9.1947. On 20.10.1947, a large column of several thousand tribesmen armed with "bren guns, machine guns, mortars and flame throwers" attacked the frontiers of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. "Srinagar trembled before the danger of the tribesmen's invasion." It was alleged that the tribesmen were being aided by Pakistan. Margaret Bourke White in her work *Halfway to Freedom*. P. 208, wrote:

> *"Certainly these miniature ballistic establishments (the small factories in the tribal areas) would hardly explain the mortars, other heavy modern weapons and the two aeroplanes with which the invaders were equipped. In Pakistan towns close to the border arms were handed out before daylight to tribesmen directly from the front steps of Muslim League Headquarters. This was not quite the same thing as though the invaders were being armed directly by the Government of Pakistan. Still Pakistan is a nation with one political party – the Muslim League".*

The tribal invasion caused grave devastation in the State. The indecision of Maharaja Hari Singh gave place to deep-seated alarm and to a genuine concern for his personal safety. On 25.10.1947, the Maharaja appointed Sheikh Abdullah as the emergency administrator. The raiders were fast approaching Srinagar, destroying and looting whatever came their way. The State was in imminent peril. Sheikh Abdullah advised the Maharaja that if the State was to be saved, he must accede to India and ask for immediate military help. This advice paved the way for accession of Jammu & Kashmir to India.

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Maharaja also found no other alternative and he addressed a letter to Lord Mountbatten, the Governor General of India stating:

"I have to inform your Excellency that a grave emergency has arisen in my State and request the immediate assistance of your Government. As your Excellency is aware, the State of Jammu & Kashmir has not acceded to either the dominion of India or Pakistan. Geographically my State is contiguous with both of them. Besides, my State has a common boundary with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic and with China. In their external relations the dominions of India and Pakistan cannot ignore this fact. I wanted to take time to decide to which dominion I should accede or whether it is not in the best interest of both the dominions and my State to stand independent, of course with friendly relations with both."

After giving an account of the tribal invasion, the letter continued:

"With the conditions obtaining at present in my State and the great emergency of the situation as it exists, I have no option but to ask for help from the Indian dominion. Naturally. They cannot send the help asked for by me without my State acceding to the dominion of India. I have accordingly decided to do so and I attach the Instrument of Accession for acceptance by your Government."

Attached to the letter was an Instrument of Accession duly signed by the Ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh. The operative part of the same read:

"Whereas, the Indian Independence Act, 1947, provides that as from the fifteenth day of August, 1947, there shall be set up an independent dominion known as INDIA, and that the Government of India Act, 1935, shall with such omissions, additions, adaptations and modifications as the Governor-General may be order specify be applicable to the dominion of India;

And whereas the Government of India Act, 1935, as adopted by the Governor General, provides that an Indian state may accede to the Dominion of India by an Instrument of Accession executed by the ruler thereof:

*Now therefore I Shriman Indar Mahander Rajrajeshwar Maharajadhiraj Shri Hari Singh Ji Jammu Kashmir Naresh Tatha Tibet adi Deshadhipathi Ruler of Jammu and Kashmir in the exercise of my sovereignty in and over my said State do hereby execute this my Instrument of accession..."***

Lord Mountbatten, the Governor – General of India indicated his acceptance in the following words:

"I do hereby accept this Instrument of Accession.
Dated this twenty-seventh day of October Nineteen Hundred and Forty – Seven."

The Instrument of Accession was in no way different from the executed by some 500 other States. It was unconditional, voluntary and absolute. It was not subject to any exceptions. It bound the

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State of Jammu and Kashmir and India together legally and constitutionally. The execution of the Instrument of Accession by the Maharaja and its acceptance by the Governor – General finally settled the issue of accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

After accepting the Instrument of Accession, Lord Mountbatten wrote a *personal* **DO** letter to Maharaja Hari Singh in reply to his letter, which had accompanied the Instrument of Accession but was not a part of the Instrument of Accession. In his letter Lord Mountbatten wrote:

"...my Government have decided to accept the accession of Kashmir State to the dominion of India. In consistence with their policy that in the case of any State where the issue of accession has been the subject of dispute, the question of accession should be decided in accordance with the wishes of the people of the State, it is my Government's wish that, as soon as law and order have been restored in Kashmir and its soil cleared of the invader, the question of State's accession should be settled by a reference to the people."

This statement has figured as a controversial feature of Kashmir's accession to India. Critics of the accession have steadfastly maintained that this stipulation renders the accession conditional and that the question of State's accession has to be settled by a reference to the people of the State. That, however, is not so. The 'wish' was at the most a pious hope. It did not render the accession conditional. The only documents relevant to the accession were the Instrument of Accession and the Indian Independence Act and both the constitutional documents did not contemplate any conditions and therefore there was no question of the accession being conditional.

Mr. M.C. Mahajan – (Accession of Kashmir to India: The inside story: p. 19-21) rightly opined that the "finality which is statutory cannot be made contingent on conditions imposed outside the powers of the statue. Any rider which militates against the finality is clearly ultravires and has to be rejected." Rruler of Jammu and Kashmir never accepted the view of Lord Mountbatten. That 'wish', therefore, had no legal effect. Pakistan, however, to suit itself, refused to recognize the accession as an act of "cowardly ruler" engineered with the 'aggressive' help of the Indian Government. It charged that the accession had been obtained by force. The Official organ of Muslim League – 'Dawn' on 5.11.1947 from Karachi quoted Mr. Liaqat Ali Khan saying:

'We do not recognize the accession. The accession of Kashmir to India is a fraud, perpetrated on the people of Kashmir by its cowardly Ruler with the aggressive help of Indian Government".

Alan Cambell Johson in his treatise *'Mission with Mountbatten'* writes:

"Indeed, the State's Ministry, under Patel's direction, went out of its way to take no action which could be interpreted as forcing Kashmir's hand and to give assurances that accession to Pakistan would not be taken amiss by India."

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On his return to London, Lord Mountbatten narrated:

"Had he (the Maharaja of Kashmir) acceded to Pakistan before August 14, the future Government of India had allowed me to give His Highness an assurance that no objection whatever would be raised by them."++

Moreover, it cannot be denied that the Maharaja of Kashmir offered to accede to the Indian dominion after the assaults and raids had started on the State from across the borders. When at his meeting with Lord Mountbatten on 1.11.1947 Mr. Jinnah claimed that the accession of Kashmir to India was based on violence, Lord Mountbatten replied, "the accession had indeed been brought about by violence, but the violence came from tribesmen, for whom Pakistan, and not India was responsible."
The accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India imposed an obligation on the dominion of India to defend the State. To drive the invader out of the State was the task which the dominion of India was asked to face as soon as it finally accepted the Instrument of Accession. The request and warnings of Government of India to the Government of Pakistan to deny assistance and bases to the invaders met with no response. India, therefore, decided to lodge a complaint with the Security Council.
India invoked Article 35 of the Charter of United Nations and complained to the Security Council against Pakistan. Under Article 35, a member is entitled to bring before the Security Council a 'situation', which imperils international peace. The Government of India appealed to the Security Council a 'situation', which imperils international peace. The Government of India appealed to the Security Council, to ask the Government of Pakistan:

1. to prevent Pakistan Government personnel, military and civil, participating in or assisting the invasion of Jammu.
2. to call upon other Pakistani nationals to desist from taking any part in the fighting in Jammu and Kashmir State:
3. to deny to the invaders:
   (a) accesses to and use of its territory for operations against Kashmir;
   (b) military and other supplies;
   (c) all kinds of aid that might tend to prolong the present struggle;
   (Security Council Document No. S/628 dated 2.1.1948.)

On 15.1.1948, there was delivered to the Secretary General of the Security Council a letter from Pakistan Government emphatically rejecting the Indian charges. The letter made counter charges against India. Those amongst others included:

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1. a persistent attempt to undo the partition scheme;
2. a preplanned and extensive campaign of genocide against the Muslims in East Punjab and Punjab princely States;
3. the acquisition of Kashmir's accession by fraud and violence.
(Security Council Document No/ S/646 dated 15.1.1948).

Throughout the prolonged deliberations of the Council, India's spokesmen concentrated their attention almost exclusively on the tribal invasion and the legal fact of Kashmir's accession to India. This was, indeed, the limited issue referred to the United Nations. Indian spokesman concluded his opening statement by declaring:

"We have referred to the Security Council a simple and straightforward issue... the withdrawal and expulsion of the raiders and the invaders from the soil of Kashmir and the immediate stoppage of the fight are ... the first and the only tasks to which we have to address ourselves."
(Security Council Verbatim Report No. S/P. V. 227 dated 15.1.1948).

Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Sir Mohammed Zafarullah Khan advanced the same thesis as appeared in the 'Dawn' dated 5.11.1947 in the Security Council. He even alleged that the Maharaja had no authority to sign the Instrument of Accession as he had lost the confidence of his people (S/P.V/ 534 dated 6.3.1951). A position which does not stand any legal scrutiny. Did the Maharaja have the right to sign the Instrument of Accession for his State or not? During the British Administration in India, the Crown dealt with the Maharaja alone. It recognized him only. Also, when the Government of Pakistan concluded a Standstill Agreement with the Maharaja, it did so on the basis that the Maharaja was the sole representative of the State. These associations were perfectly justified for, in a monarchical form of Government, it is the Monarch who personifies and represents the State? And the Government of India, in its relations with the Maharaja, acted in accordance with law and recognized international practice. The Instrument of Accession was required to be signed by the Ruler only and every State, which acceded to either of the dominion, did so by executing an instrument of Accession signed by its Ruler and accepted by the Governor General of the concerned Dominion.

The Security Council, in accepting India's complaint did indirectly recognize the accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India and indeed the legality of the accession was not the point which India had brought before the Security Council. It is important to note that the question of *aggression* alone fell within the competence of the Security Council. The Indian spokesman's statement was followed by a brilliant address by Sir Mohammed Zafarullah Khan of Pakistan who with his brilliant eloquence

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'broadened' the issue and sought to bring various disputes between India and Pakistan together. Frankly speaking it was at this stage that the 'aggressor' and 'victim of aggression' were put on a par in the Security Council. The result of these deliberations at the floor of the Security Council was the resolution dated 17.1.1948 which both India and Pakistan accepted. In this resolution the Security Council called upon India and Pakistan 'to immediately take all measures within their power (including public appeals to their people) calculated to improve the situation and to refrain from making any statements and from doing or causing to be done or permitting any acts which might aggravate the situation..." (Security Council Document No. S/651 dated 17.1.1948).

On 27.1.1948, India and Pakistan submitted draft proposals to the President of the Security Council on the appropriate methods of solving the Kashmir dispute.

In the Security Council now the victim and the aggressor were placed at par. No progress was made in the Security Council and the matter entered a stalemate. At home, the internal administration of the State was being governed by the Jammu & Kashmir Constitution Act, 1939. On March 5, 1948, Sir Hari Singh issued a proclamation *inter alia* stating:

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.....

My Council of Ministers shall take appropriate steps, as soon as restoration of normal conditions have been completed, to convene a National Assembly based upon adult suffrage, having due regard to the principal that the number of representatives from each voting area should, as far as practicable, be proportionate the population of that area.

The Constitution to be framed by the National Assembly shall provide adequate safeguards for the minorities and contain appropriate provisions guaranteeing freedom of conscience, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.

The National Assembly shall, as soon as the work of framing the new constitution is completed, submit it through the Council of Ministers for my acceptance."

This proclamation was followed by a yet another proclamation of 20th June, 1949 issued by Maharaja Hari Singh.

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"Now, therefore, I hereby direct and declare", reads that proclamation, "all powers and functions whether legislative, executive or judicial which are exercisable by me in relation to the State and its government including in particular my right and prerogative of making laws, of issuing proclamations, orders and ordinances, or remitting, commuting or reducing sentences and pardoning offenders, shall during the period of my absence from the State be exercisable by Yuvraj Karan Singh Bahadur."

On 1st of May, 1951, Yuvraj Karan Singh issued a proclamation which *inter alia* contained the following directions:

1. *A Constituent Assembly consisting of representatives of the people, elected on the basis of adult franchise, shall be constituted forthwith for the purposes of framing a Constitution for the State of Jammu and Kashmir.*
2. *The Vote at election shall be direct and [by] secret ballot;*
3. *The Constituent Assembly shall have power to act notwithstanding any vacancy in the membership thereof;*
4. *The Constituent Assembly shall frame its own agenda and make rules for the governing of its procedure and the conduct of its business.*

The idea of convening a Constituent Assembly for Jammu and Kashmir State was conceived during the "Quit Kashmir Movement" even before the partition of India was contemplated and would have been implemented but for the invasion of the State, after the partition of India, by the tribesmen from across the Pakistan territory. When in 1948, the National Conference formed an interim Government in the State under the proclamation of Sir Hari Singh dated 5.3.1948, it was expressly declared in paragraph 4 of the proclamation that, as soon as normal conditions were restored, steps would be taken to convene a National Assembly based upon adult suffrage, to frame a Constitution for the State". The convening of the Constituent Assembly in 1951 was, thus, a natural outcome of the desire of the people of the State to have a democratic Government responsible to the legislature, elected by the people. The Constitution Assembly was invested with the authority to frame the Constitution for the State and to decide its future.

"Today is our day of destiny. A day which comes only once in the life of a nation ... after centuries we have reached the harbour of our freedom which for the first time in history will enable the people of Jammu & Kashmir, whose duly elected representatives are gathered here, to shape the future of their country after wise deliberation and mould their future organs of the Government. No person and no power can stand between them and the fulfillment of this their historic task..."

declared Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah in his inaugural address to the Constituent Assembly and added that the Assembly shall give *"its reasoned conclusions regarding accession"*

The Constituent Assembly of the Jammu & Kashmir State which was convened on the basis of adult suffrage comprising of the representatives of the people of the State and which represented the

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people of the entire State in unequivocal terms *ratified* the State's accession to India, through a well-considered resolution of the Constituent Assembly on 15.2.1954, after great deal of debate, discussion and consideration. The debate was free and frank. The task of constitution making entered a decisive phase when in the 12th session of the Constituent Assembly of Jammu & Kashmir held from September 29, 1956 to November 19, 1956, the drafting committee on October 10, 1956 presented the draft Constitution. After detailed discussion the Constitution was approved and adopted on 17th November, 1956. Section 1 to 8 and 158, which deal with the State territory, permanent residents, relationship of the State with the Union of India came into force and once. The remaining sections came into force on 26th January, 1957, which day is referred to as the commencement of the Constitution.

The Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir is a written document, having 158 sections and seven schedules.

The Preamble to the Constitution of Kashmir reads:

> *'We, the people of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, having solemnly resolved, in pursuance of the accession of this State of India which took place on the twenty-sixth day of October, 1947, to further define the existing relationship of the State with the Union of India as an integral part thereof, and to secure to ourselves—*
>
> *Justice, social, economic and political; Liberty of thought expression, belief, faith and worship;*
>
> *Equality of status and opportunity; and to promote among us all;*
> *Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation.*
> *In our Constituent Assembly this seventeenth day of November, 1956, do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this constitution."*

The people of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, thus, finally settled the controversy regarding accession through the Constituent Assembly comprising of their elected representatives. No one, even the worst critic, has ever doubted the representative nature of the Constituent Assembly. Self-determination is a one-time slot – the people of the State took a final decision and, therefore, the question of any further "self-determination" or 'plebiscite' does not arise either legally or morally. The 'wishes' of the people of J&K have been duly ascertained through the duly elected Constituent Assembly. The States' accession to India, therefore cannot any longer be questioned or doubted. The 1954 resolution of the Constituent Assembly was followed by incorporation of Section 3 in the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir which reads: *"The State of Jammu and Kashmir is and shall be an integral part of the Union of India." The use of the expression 'is and shall be' is significant. It talks both of the past and the future relationship of the State with the Union of India.* This section is in affirmation and reiteration of the desire of the people of the State to be an integral part of

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India. It has been put beyond the powers of the State Legislature to amend by virtue of the mandate of Section 147 of the Constitution. This provision was apparently incorporated in order to "avoid and fissiparous tendencies raising their ugly heads in the future."

Thus, it follows that the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to the Union of India is legal and constitutional, which has been 'ratified' by the people of the State also. It is therefore complete, final, legal and irrevocable. The sovereign British Parliament vested the power to sign the Instrument of Accession in the ruler in his own discretion under the Indian Independence Act, 1947 read with the Government of India Act, 1935. Its acceptance was within the power of the Governor-General. The Instrument of Accession of Jammu and Kashmir was signed by the ruler and accepted by the Governor-General of India. As per the assurance given to the Security Council, the question of accession has been finally set at rest by the people of the State through their elected representatives in 1954. If the accession of Kashmir has to be reopened, the same reopening would imply going back 54 years and reopening the whole question of the independence of India and Pakistan. The resolution of the Security Council (91 of 1951) dated 30th March 1951 cannot effect the constitutional provisions contained in the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir because even International treaties, which are in conflict with the Domestic Law of a country, must give way to the Domestic Law under settled legal practice. The Accession of Jammu and Kashmir State to India on 26th October 1947 is legally sound, constitutionally binding and irrevocable

Article 253 has been made applicable to the State in a modified from with a proviso that no decision affecting the disposition of the State shall be made by the Government of India except with the consent of the State Government. Legally speaking, even if a Government in Jammu & Kashmir wanted to give, its consent to secession of the State, a position otherwise not permissible under the Constitution of India, the State Government would be banned under section 3 of its own constitution to give such consent. Section 147 of the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir prohibits any amendment of Section 3, which is a basic feature of the State Constitution. Thus, holding of a plebiscite would be repugnant of the constitutions of India & Kashmir.

It is interesting to note that the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India is quite analogous to the annexation of Texas by the United States of America. When Mexico separated from the Spanish Empire and set up as an independent Republic, Texas was an integral part of the new State. Later, Texas revolted against the Mexican authorities and established itself as an independent entity. The independent status of Texas was recognized by the United States of America and the principal powers of Europe. In 1844, the Government of Texas, threatened by the menace of predatory incursions from Mexico, requested the Government of the United States of America to annex the State. This proposal was sanctioned by the American Congress in a joint resolution in March 1845. After this sanction, America

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sent an army to defend the western frontiers of Texas. The Government of Mexico strongly protested against and alleged violation of the rights of Mexico and even the diplomatic intercourse between the two Governments was suspended. The Mexican protest evoked the following reply from the Government of the United States of America:

> *"The Government of United States did not consider this joint resolution as a violation of any of the rights of Mexico, or that it offered any just cause or offence to its Government; that the Republic of Texas as an independent power, owing no allegiance to Mexico, and constituting no part of her territory or rightful sovereignty and jurisdiction."*

In Texas case it has never been contended that the annexation was not valid nor was the action of the United States to send an army to defend the western frontiers of Texas ever questioned. The case of accession of Kashmir stands at a much stronger footing than that of Texas and the criticism regarding the validity of the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India is wholly meaningless and unsustainable – the accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India is legal, final and binding. The question of holding a 'plebiscite' in Jammu and Kashmir is thus, legally not permissible. The theory is flawed on legal as well as moral grounds. Even the U.N. Secretary General, Kofi Annan has accepted this position – He has clearly said that U.N. resolutions are no longer implementable obviously because it was the entire State of Jammu & Kashmir, including, the areas of PoK and areas given by Pakistan to China, which had acceded to India and unless all those areas were restored to India, the pre-condition for holding, plebiscite under U.N. resolutions, is impracticable and un-implementable. The clock cannot be put back – one must look forward only.

Since a part of the territory of the State is under the occupation of an invader, the holding of elections in the entire State is not possible. The Constitution takes into account this situation and provides that till that area "ceases to be so occupied and the people residing in that area elect their representatives," twenty four seats in the Legislative Assembly shall remain vacant and shall not be taken into account for reckoning the total membership of the Assembly.

Thus, in conclusion it can be said without any reservation that the Accession of Jammu and Kashmir State to India on 26th October 1947 is legally sound, constitutionally binding and irrevocable.

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* Former Chief Justice of India.

** A.S. Anand. *The Constitution of Jammu & Kashmir* – its Development and Comments – Third Edn. 1998 pp. 74-75. For the text of the Instrument of Accession. See Appendix III, pp.382-383. For full text of the letter see white papers on Jammu & Kashmir, 1948 pp. 46-47.

\+ (Compbell Johnson: Alan, Mission with Mountbatten, p. 225).

++ A.S. Anand: Constitution of Jammu & Kashmir – Third Edn. p.78.

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PRE-INDEPENDENCE SOCIO POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN JAMMU

by

Balraj Puri, a leading political analyst and a prolific writer. Widely known for his work in the field of human rights protection.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, Jammu started experiencing reverberations of the political and social awakening in the rest of the country. The new consciousness was reflected in the urge for starting newspapers and associations by the emerging elite; in the field of religious and social reform since politics was still a taboo in the state. Lala Hans Raj Mahajan was the most outstanding leader of that phase of Jammu's history. He pioneered formation of associations of various communities like the Mahajan Sabha and the Rajput Sabha as also of the Anjuman-i-Islamia and acted as their honorary secretary which ensured their mutual cooperation in the common task of social reform. The first secular organisation of the state, also non-political to start with, was Dogra Sabha founded by no other person than Hans Raj in 1904 - He donimated the entire social reform movement in Jammu region for half a century from 1892, when he entered public life, to 1944 when he died. His field of work included campaign for Swadeshi, temperance, rights of women, spread of education, economic betterment of backward areas, reform in ceremonies observed at marriage, death and other social occasions, help to widows and orphans, cow-protection, cleanliness and redressal of grievances against omissions and commissions of administration.

Needless to remind that these activities were vital adjuncts of the national freedom movement. Hans Raj started first two monthly newspapers in the state named the Dogra Gazette and the Mahajan Niti Patar in 1907. During this period Arya Samaj also extended its work to the state. Its role was particularly noteworthy in the eradication of untouchability. It faced hostility of the state government on two counts. Firstly, the ruling family was traditionalist Hindu and secondly the Samaj was politically suspect in British India. Its work among Harijans offended the orthodoxy. In a brutal attack on the Harijan meeting at Batehra, on Jammu-Akhnoor road an armed gang of caste Hindus murdered

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an Arya Samaj leader, Ram Chand, in 1923. His martyrdom, however, gave a fresh impetus to the Harijan reform work. The unfinished work in social reform of Hans Raj and Ram Chand was taken up by a more militant personality of Budh Singh who added a political dimension to it. He resigned from the prestigious post of a deputy commissioner in 1925 and plunged with a crusading zeal in the task of eradication of untouchability, end of bager system (forced labour), promotion of communal harmony and introduction of radical political reforms like the establishment of a fully elected assembly and responsible government. His saintly life earned him the title of Mahatma from his people. An active collaborator of Lala Hans Raj and Mahatma Budh Singh was Lala Mulk Raj Saraf who founded the weekly newspaper Ranbir in 1924 which remained the premier paper of the state for the next quarter of a century. The triumvirate led the socio-political movement in Jammu region during this period with the Ranbir as its mouthpiece. Among the Muslims, Wahabis, Ahrars and Ahmedyas from the neighbouring Punjab provided the catalysts for socio-religious changes. Thus socio-religious reform movements were the harbinger of political awakening in Jammu. Mahatma Budh Singh, who can rightly be described as father of political movement in the state, radicalised and politicalised the Dogra Sabha as its thrice elected president. He called it the Congress of the State. It included members of all communities not only of Jammu but also of Kashmir. The Maharaja banned the party when it gave the call for hartal in protest against the arrest of Gandhi in 1930. While the political movement in Kashmir was essentially anti-ruler, it was essentially anti-British in Jammu. In fact press and leaders had supported Maharaja Pratap Singh when he was forced to abdicate and Maharaja Hari Singh when he tried to assert the autonomy of the state and favoured freedom of the country at the Round Table Conference, in London. Thus the protest demonstrations in Jammu on Gandhi's arrest in 1930 raised slogans of Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai and Maharaja Bahadur ki Jai. But as Gandhi and Kashmir's anti-Maharaja movement grew closer and Maharaja reiterated his loyalty to the British, pro-Gandhi movement in Jammu also lost some of its momentum. Further, Kashmir's movement was not merely anti-autocracy but its battle cry of Dogra Raj murdabad had also anti-Dogra connotation which could not endear itself to the Dogra community. When Sheikh Abdullah launched the Quit Kashmir movement in 1946 and demanded abrogation of the Treaty of Amritsar, he asked the Maharaja to leave the valley and specifically conceded his right to rule over Jammu. The treaty itself had added only Kashmir to the territory of Gulab Singh as he was already the ruler of Jammu at that time. Meanwhile the Congress Committee in Jammu which was spearheading the anti-British movement in Jammu was asked by its High command to wind itself and join the National Conference which as a regional Kashmiri movement was handicapped in spreading its influence in Jammu. The anti-Maharaja movement did inspire urban Muslim intelligentsia. But it, too, could not remain integrated with the Kashmir movement when the latter became an explicit expression of Kashmiri identity and not merely Muslim identity. Influence of the Muslim

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politics of Punjab on Jammu and ideological divergence are often cited as reasons for parting of ways between Kashmir's Sheikh Abdullah and Jammu's Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas. But regional dimension of their differences was no less important. For violation of a gentleman's agreement between Kashmiri and Jammu leaders over rotation of the leadership of the National Conference by the former was stated to be the immediate cause of the rift between them. The character and strength of the political movement in Kashmir and its affinity with the national freedom movement thus inhibited the growth of Jammu's political movement and eventually split its rather weak regional identity along communal lines. Like Kashmir, first mass political uprising in Jammu started on religious issues. On April 29, 1931, after the Idd prayer, the Imam was asked by a sub-inspector not to address the gathering as it was suspected to be a political speech. But Muslims took it as interference in their religious affairs. In another incidence, a copy of the holy Quran of a Muslim policemen was allegedly thrown and thus desecrated by a Hindu constable. It was reaction to these incidents that ignited the first Muslim uprising in Kashmir. The origin of freedom movement in the state is universally traced to those reactions. Among Hindus, the first anti-establishment upsurge started in 1936 on an incident of cow slaughter in which the High Court sentenced the accused to only one year against the legally prescribed punishment of seven years. Their agitation lasted for 36 days which was terminated on the intervention of Pandit Krishan Kant Malvia and proclamation of the Maharaja that the High Court's decision would not be treated as a ruling binding on future cases. After Abdullah-Abbas differences and de-recognition of the Jammu Congress Committee, Muslim Conference and Hindu Sabha filled the political vacuum in the towns of the region led by Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas and Gopal Dutt Mengi respectively. The Hindu Sabha was divided in pro-establishment and anti-establishment factions. The first was represented by Kaviraj Vaishno Gupt, Shivnath Nath Nanda and Prem Nath Dogra while the latter by Gopal Dutt Mengi, Jyotshi Ram Krishan, Raizada Amar Chand and Dhanpat Rai. Mengi took active part in the secular Kisan movements of Jandrah and Chanehni against the local jagirdars. The National Conference, under the leadership of Budh Singh, also actively participated in the latter movement which assumed the form of a mass upsurge. Chanahni became a strong base of the National Conference. Mirpur was another citadel of the National Conference in the region. Its fertile soil produced stalwarts like Budh Singh, Raja Mohd Akbar, Haji Wahab Uddin, Chaudary Mohd Shaffi, Comrade Krishan Dev Sethi, Abdul Khaliq Ansari, Master Roshan Lal and Comrade Dev Raj. Ghulam Qadir Bande, called sher-i-Poonch, represented the local aspirations of Poonch and made it a secure base of the party. Shaffi's centre of activities was in Jammu. He carried on a relentless struggle against communal forces.

He played an active role in mobilising popular unrest against rising prices in 1943, which culminated in what was called Roti agitation. An all party committee with Gopal Dutt Mengi as the

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president and Allah Rakha Sagar (second in command of Ghulam Abbas) as its secretary led the agitation in which five Hindus and two Muslims died of police firing. It was a unique demonstration of the Hindu-Muslim unity. The momentum of unity could not be maintained for long on account of lack of patronage by the national leadership, limitations of Kashmiri leadership and disunity in the local secular forces. Socialists and communists which mainly comprised these forces were sharply divided on their attitude towards the Quit India movement and interpretation of the Quit Kashmir movement. My most effective contribution during that phase of Jammu politics was through my weekly paper Pukar which I started in 1942 which was a common forum for both these movements. Moreover, steering clear of the these controversies, I was able to mobilise the Jammu students union, as a common and the most effective platform of all anti-British and anti-Maharaja forces which articulated the patriotic urges of the younger generation. It initiated a political and intellectual renaissance. Its products have made their mark in many fields of life. The Maharaja's reluctance to accede to the Indian Union was supported by the Muslim Conference and the Hindu Sabha, till the riot wave following the partition of the country, in particular of Punjab, engulfed the Jammu region and the tribal raid over Kashmir forced him to do so. On behalf of the students union, we had led a movement for release of Sheikh Abdullah and accession of the state to the Indian in the teeth of opposition of the Hindu and Muslim communal groups. The immediate post-independence era witnessed total vindication and assertion of the secular freedom movement and total confusion and collapse of the communal forces. Progressive and pro-accession group of the Hindu Sabha led by Gopal Dutt Mengi joined the secular mainstream. However, Muslim Conference leaders like Ghulam Abbas and Allah Rakha Sagar were externed to Pakistan. Who knows what adjustments they, too, would have made with the changed situation and what would have been their contribution to the politics of the region, if they were allowed to stay on in Jammu. Lack of recognition of Jammu's identity and urges by the new ruling leadership which belonged to the valley and the secular leadership of the country proved as inhibiting factors in the growth of powerful secular force in Jammu in the post-independence era as it was the case before independence. Jammu's autonomous personality within the state is a necessary condition for maintaining its secular character.

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PEACE WITH HONOUR

by

Dr. Karan Singh, M.P., former Sadar-i-Riyasat, ex-Union Minister, a prolific writer on varied subjects and a strong proponent of inter-religion dialogue.

Having been a witness over the last 55 years to all the dramatic twists and turns in the tortuous history of Jammu and Kashmir since my father signed the Instrument of Accession in October 1947, I have watched with keen interest the recent electoral and post-electoral developments. These have resulted in the emergence of a coalition government in the state for the first time, headed by the redoubtable Mufti Mohammad Sayeed who, after over a decade in the shadows, has suddenly emerged as a key figure in the new dispensation and fulfilled his life-long ambition to become chief minister. Looking at the whole situation in the broader perspective, five major points emerge.

Despite grave threats and killings by militants in the run-up to the elections in which about a thousand people lost their lives, the fact that the elections were held successfully, that well over 40 per cent of the electorate cast their votes, and that by all accounts the elections were free and fair, has been a major achievement. It showed once again the inherent strength of the democratic process. There must be many in the Valley who are now deeply regretting that they missed this opportunity to secure a substantial presence in the new legislature. The credit for the successful elections goes equally to the government of India, the Election Commission, Farooq Abdullah's former government and of course, the voters who braved bullets to choose the ballot.

In keeping with the trend in other parts of India, the electorate in J&K has produced a fragmented verdict so that no single party got a majority even in any of the regions, far less in the whole state. In a way, this reflected the considerable differences in the aspirations of the people from the three regions, and also made a coalition government inevitable.

Jammu is deeply disappointed at having been denied the chief ministership, which, for the first time since Independence, was within its reach. However, in the broader circumstances that we face in J&K, Congress president Sonia Gandhi's decision to allow the People's Democratic Party to head the government needs to be supported. How the new government on the political, administrative

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and economic fronts will be anxiously watched. After the turmoil of the last 13 years, the people of the state look forward not only to multi-level political dialogue but to a more transparent and responsive administration.

It has also become clear that the old unifocal structure of the state revolving around Srinagar will now have to be replaced by new a sub federal dispensation in which the two regions of Jammu and Ladakh are at last able to get a fair deal. For the last half century the people of Jammu have suffered from a sense of grievance regarding the distribution of political, financial and administrative powers, and though two commissions were set up to look into regional imbalances, headed by retired chief justice of India – the Gajendragadkar Commission in 1967 and the Sikri Commission in 1977 – their recommendations were never effectively implemented in letter or in spirit.

Ladakh represents a very special case, and there is a strong move there for a direct relationship with the Centre. I will not comment on this highly sensitive issue, but it needs to be stressed that it can no longer be brushed under the carpet. Mufti Sayeed's announcement that he would ensure a fair deal for all the three regions is to be welcomed, but it remains to be seen what concrete steps are taken in this direction. There is also the necessity of creating conditions for the Kashmiri Pandits to return in their hearths and homes in the Valley.

The broader question of the precise relationship of J&K with the rest of India, revolving around the demand for autonomy, has to be addressed. The wide ranging dialogue that has now been promised with all sections of political opinion within and outside the legislature will provide an opportunity for all these issues to be discussed in depth so that, if at all possible, a consensus is arrived at. Keeping in mind the wide divergences of opinion, this will not be an easy task, but nonetheless, it has to be addressed with the imagination and sincerity of purpose.

Above all, what is needed in the state today, particularly in the Valley, is a progress of reconciliation and healing. It is difficult for people not belonging to the state to realise the extent of the trauma, which the people have suffered as a result of 13 years of militancy and counter insurgency operations. The wails of the widows and the cries of the orphans have not yet been heard around the country.

There is a tendency to look upon J&K simply as a political problem, ignoring the fact that it represents a human tragedy of epic proportions. This task of reconciliation and healing is not one that the government alone can undertake, although it is good to hear Mufti Sayeed reiterating its importance. Civil society as a whole, in the state as well as in the rest of India, and especially organizations working in the field of inter-faith harmony will have to get involved in this process, which will necessarily take many years to complete. However, a beginning must be made without delay.

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In this context, the first paragraph of the Common Minimum Programme states the objectives admirably and bears quoting:

"The goal of the coalition government is to heal the physical, psychological and emotional wounds inflicted by 14 years of militancy to restore the rule of law in Jammu and Kashmir state, to complete the revival of the political process which was begun by the recently concluded elections, and to request the government of India to initiate and hold, sincerely and seriously, wide ranging consultations and dialogue, without conditions, with the members of the legislature and other segments of public opinion in all the three regions of the state, to evolve a broad-based consensus on restoration of peace with honour in the state."

Finally, there is the persistent bilateral dimension of the conflict with Pakistan going back all the way to 1947. This is a matter, which will have to be tackled under the broad rubric of the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration. Certainly, one must expect Pakistan to modify its policy of aggressively supporting militancy in J&K, but to wait until every sign of militancy is eradicated before beginning a dialogue may prove to be counter-productive. Once our internal situation stabilizes, the time will be ripe to reopen a bilateral dialogue with Pakistan. Whether that country will now take a less obsessive and more realistic view of the situation remains to be seen, but with a new government in position in Pakistan, it is time to break the ice and see how the future unfolds.

This is a moment for bold and imaginative statesmanship so that the subcontinent can finally get its act together and begin the long journey towards stability and poverty eradication.

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UNTOLD STORY OF KASHMIRI HINDUS

by

Chaman Lal Gadoo, former President, Kashmiri Samiti, Delhi. Presently Chairman of Delhi BJP's Kashmir Migrants' Cell.

Kashmir – a paradise on earth – a Rishi Bhoomi – has distinguished past history and rich culture that has been established in the chronicles of great ancient historian Kalhana who wrote "Rajatarangni" – (River Of Kings) in 12 Century. Shiv-Shakti cult, Mahayana Buddhism even Kama Sutra originated from Kashmir. There is a lot of literature on Religion, History, Philosophy and love-lore available. Thirty five percent of Sanskrit literature came from Kashmir. Shaivan philosophy got new dimensions in Kashmiri folklore. In the great saint Lalleshwari (1335-1376) sayings – Lala Wakh – we can see in depth Kashmiri Shaivism which interprets Bhakti as quest for knowledge. Lalla Wakh is popular even today.

Earlier Hindu Kings ruled Kashmir – Emperor Ashoka (2623 BC) brought Buddhism to valley. Three centuries later Emperor Kanisha was the most powerful monarch, who convened fourth Buddhist council in Kashmir at a place, called Kundalvara, which led to foundation of Mahayana Buddhism. Kashmiri missionaries carried its message to Central Asia and China. Lalitditya (AD 724-761) was the greatest Hindu Emperor Kashmir has ever produced. His empire expanded from all the four sides. He built a number of new towns with beautiful temples. The Hindus of Kashmir had a rich cultural heritage. They possessed numerous religious endowments and shrines and ancient temples built during the region of Hindu monarchs. There are many famous centers of religious pilgrimage like the Amarnath cave, Kheer Bhawani Shrine on the outskirts of the Srinagar city, the Sun temple at Martand, Mattan, the Sharika Temple on the flank of the Hari Parvat hill and the Gangabal Shrine, considered to be as sacred by the Hindus at the Ganges.

Ever since Islam had inroads in Kashmir, Hindu influence started waning. Islam spread quickly in Kashmir because there was a terrible persecution of Hindus and their forcible conversion during Muslim rule. **During the regime of Sultan Sikander (1389-1413) only eleven Hindu families survived conversion in Kashmir!** In 1972 with the collapse of Mughal Empire, Kashmir

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was taken over by Afghans. This was perhaps the worst period in Kashmir history. Sikhs took over Kashmir from Aghans in 1819 and ruled till 1846. Dogras ruled Jammu & Kashmir State from 1846 to 1947 till India got independence from British Rule. The last Dogra Ruler Maharaja Hari Singh acceded Jammu & Kashmir State to Indian Union. Pakistani tribes' men and regulars invaded the State in October 1947. The Indian Security Forces pushed out the invaders. In January 1949 a Cease-fire agreement was concluded between India and Pakistan. The Jammu & Kashmir State was given a special status under the Article 370 of the Indian Constitution.

The creation of Pakistan in 1947 was a landmark in the struggle for the unification of the Muslim Umah. Ever since Pakistan was created, it has followed a sustained policy of the thrust for expansion towards the east, as a major strategy to spread across Jammu & Kashmir and take the Muslim power to the dominantly Muslim regions of Central Asia, Magnolia and Sinking. The terrorist violence in Jammu & Kashmir, is a continuation of the consolidation of Pan-Islamic unity, of which the creation of Pakistan was a part. Pakistan claims Jammu & Kashmir on the basis of the Muslim majority of its population. And while terrorism rages in Kashmir, Pakistan demands that India be divided again to carry the partition to its logical conclusion by ceding Jammu & Kashmir to Pakistan.

India has thus been Pakistan's main target and has turned into Pakistan's killing field. Apart from three open wars and the continuing proxy war in Jammu & Kashmir, we have practically every day a bomb blast engineered by Pakistani agents in one part of the country or the other.

Jammu & Kashmir State has three districts – Hindu majority Jammu, Buddhist dominated Ladakh and predominately Muslim populated Kashmir valley. Hindu minority has been uprooted from Kashmir. The future is bleak and their existence in danger. The following census figures for Kashmir Valley speak volumes:

Years	Muslims	Hindu	Others
1941	83%	15%	2%
1981	92%	5%	3%
1991	97%	0.1%	2.9%

Muslim are the ruling elite in Kashmir. They dominate the entire economic organization and enjoy communal precedence in the social forums. Islam is virtually the official religion of the State. Whereas Muslims constitute a little more than half the population of the state, they have three-fourths share in legislative bodies, administrative organizations and all the local government institutions. In the Kashmir province, Hindus have no elected representation in the local bodies. They constitute

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less than 5 percent of the administrative services of the state and have less than one percent share in the higher cadres of the state administration. Muslim monopolizes 94 percent of the State services in Kashmir. The Hindus of Kashmir province have absolutely no share in the decision-making clusters of the State Government, which have always been constituted by the Muslims of Kashmir province. More than 90 percent of the admissions to professional, technical and other educational institutions are reserved for Muslims in one form or the other, purely on communal basis. The Hindus, Sikhs and other minorities share a mere 8 percent of the educational facilities that the State provides. In the financial sphere, the Muslims own and control the entire economic and industrial structure of Kashmir province. They own 96 percent of the agricultural land, orchards and other urban landed estates. They enjoy monopoly over the entire industrial organization, trade and commerce, financial resources and exports of the province of Kashmir. They have complete monopoly in trading in fruits, carpets, shawls, woodwork, silk, etc. The Hindus of Kashmir have never been allowed to have a share in the all important tourist industry, the transport organization, concessionary contracts for state property, roads and buildings and the licenses for imports, which the State Government has been lavishly distributing among the Muslims. There has been a total economic persecution for Kashmiri Hindus!

The Jammu & Kashmir is a prosperous state which in terms of per capita income is placed fourth among the Indian states. The prosperity of Muslims accounted for a greater share, due to more favourable allocation of financial resources for the Kashmir division, varying between 65 to 69 percent as compared to 35-31 percent allocated to the two divisions of Jammu and Ladakh. According to an estimate done in 1989-1990 Central Financial assistance to State has been more than Rs. 70,000 crores (Rs. 700 billion).

The rumblings of the storm, which engulfed the Hindus in Kashmir, were heard long before it burst. Right from the beginning of the year, 1989, the Hindus, other than Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir, professionally a trading community, wre served with notices to quite Kashmir because they were Indian Hindus, and had acquired interests which impinged upon the rights of the Muslims of the valley. The ultimate and devastating blow came on January 19th 1990, late in the night when hundreds and thousands of Kashmiri Muslims came out in streets and the loudspeakers fitted on the mosques started yelling **"Kashmiri Pandits! Leave Kashmir at once but without your women folks! Otherwise face death!"** Then hell got loose! Hundreds of innocent Kashmiri Pandits – Men, Women and Children were killed in cold blood. Their houses and business were burned or looted and temples decrated. Among those killed were people from all sections of Hndus society-teachers, lawyers, doctors, nurses, political activities, media-men, intellectuals and men of small means. Worst victims were women. The terrorists' killings, accompanied by torture and

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atrocities, were unheard of in the annals of human history. Torture deaths were brought by inhuman practices which include strangulation by using steel wires, hanging, impaling, branding with hot irons, burning alive, lynching, gauging of eyes before assassination, slicing, dismemberment of limbs, drowning, dragging to death, draining of blood and slaughter. On the eve of Republic Day of India (January 25, 1998), **twenty-three innocent Kashmiri Pandits** – men, women and children were killed at Wondhama (Kashmir). Six women and four children who were hiding in a temple were burnt alive. Sixteen bullets were pumped in a one-year-old infant. The widespread killings, assault on women, the fear of conversions, and the shocking experience of being forced to join the militant campaign against India, were the main reasons which drove out the Hindus from Kashmir. The total breakdown of the law and order machinery spread a sense ofinsecurity, which was so severe that most of the Hindus, more than 300,000, escaped from the valley, and migrated to Jammu and Delhi primarily, in dark hours of night, without any of their belongings. Thus the ethnic cleansing of Hindus was completed. A mission accomplished by Pakistan at the expense of people in Kashmir. **Kashmiri Pandits became Refugees in their own country!**

In Jammu, where the refugees poured in thousands, the State Government failed to rise to the occasionand provide temporary shelter and relief to the hundreds of thousands of the Hindus sprawling on the streets of Temple City of Jammu. Were it not for the yeoman service of the voluntary Hindu organisations, which immediately swung into action to oranise relief for the refugees, hunger and disease would have taken a heavy toll of the grief stricken people, who had suddenly been thrown intothe wilderness. No help came from any quarter. Silence of death fell on the liberals, the protagonists of secularism, the radicals and the rest. Gita-Bhawan, a temple complex situated in the heart of the Jammu City, adjacent to the Shiva Temple, was converted into a reception-cum-transit camp, where the Hindu refugees arriving from Kashmir disembarked.

In Delhi, the other main place, where the refugees arrived in large numbers, Kashmiri Samiti, Delhi took up the work of relief and rehabilitation. A transit camp was set up at Kashmiri Bhawan (headquarters of Samiti) itself, later they were shifted to 14 other camps in Delhi. The Government awoke to the tragedy, facing the Hindus only, after the exodus had reached its peak. Unfortunately, the Refugee camps continue to be forgotten and left unattended. Torn tents were never replaced. The sanitary facility, drainage, drinking water pipes, broke up in few months after the camps were established but nothing has been done to improve the living conditions in the camps for the last 13 years, resulting in the high death rate and low birth rate of the displaced community.

The ethnic cleansing of the Hindus from Kashmir, is a part of the game plan by the Muslims, with the connivance of the State Government, to change the demographic composition of the

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Kashmir province and the Muslim majority district of the Jammu province. It is ironical that Hindus are not able to live in Kashmir because the majority of the population iS Muslim, but the Muslims can live anywhere in India where practically the entire population comprises of Hindus. Compounding the problem, as many as ten million alien Muslims from Pakistan and Bangladesh have infiltrated illegally to India.

The Indian people and the Government of India have to realize the danger that is posed by Muslim communalism and the militarisation of fundamentalism in the State. The whole mind-set of seeking inter-community balances of interests as a basis of the settlement of the crisis in the State, may ensure a measure of advantage in so far as the Muslims vote banks are concerned. But, it is bound to undermine the secular foundations of the Indian polity, its democratic institutions and its security.

The future of the Hindus of Kashmir, their return to their homes, and the right to security of life and property, and freedom of faith, must be visualized in terms of a settlement of the communal problem in Jammu & Kashmir. There is no doubt about the desire of the community of Hindus to return to Kashmir, where it actually belongs, where its roots and temples are, and which is the mother of their culture and of their history. The Hindus of Kashmir reiterate their determination to return to their homes and hearth and the land of their birth but with dignity and honor and not to be pushed back into Kashmir, for the slavery of a Muslim State or be used as human shields. **Kashmiri Pandits can return safely to Kashmir, only after Kashmir province is reorganized into a Centrally Administered Union Territory with Article 370 abrogated. Till then, Please pray for us and our security!**

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नौजवान बुजुर्ग लफ्ज़ों के सराफ़

चारों ओर से झुकी बर्फीली पहाड़ियों के बदन से बूंद बूंद गिरते पानी का झरना श्रीनगर में चश्मा शाही के नाम से जाना जाता है। कई बरस पहले की ढ़लती सुबह उगती दोपहर की पीली पीली धूप में उतर रही थी। ओक भर भर कर जल पी लेने के बाद भी जब प्यास न बुझी तब मैंने आंखों पर ठंडी उंगलियां फिराकर पीछे मुड़ मुड़ कर देखते देखते चश्माशाही की सीढ़ियां उतरनी शुरू कर दी थीं। ठंडे पानी से तृप्त और अपृत आत्मा को घसीटती मैं सीढ़ियां उतरने लगी थी। ठक ठक की आवाज से चौंक कर मैंने देखा गांधी टोपी, शेरवानी और डोगरे दोहरे पायजामें में एक बुजुर्ग, नौजवानों की तरह सीढ़ियां चढ़कर ऊपर आ रहे थे। मैंने पहचान कर हाथ जोड़ दिए और पूछा यहां कैस? वो बोले सुबह घूमने निकला था जब चश्माशाही के पास आ गया तो सोचा क्यों न पानी पीकर ही जाऊं। चश्माशाही श्रीनगर से सात–आठ मील दूर है। मैं हैरान होकर उन्हें देखने लगी। उन्होंने हंसकर कहा, इतना तो मैं रोज़ ही घूम लेता हूं। मैं सीढ़ियाँ उतरने लगी वो सीढ़ियां चढने लगे। ये हमारे जम्मूं के बुजुर्ग पत्रकार श्री मुल्कराज सराफ़ थे। जम्मूं की गलियों और सड़कों पर मैंने इन्हें इसी लिबास में लोगों के अभिवादन का उत्तर देते, आते–जाते कई बार देखा था।

सराफ़ साहब को मैं डोगरी के प्रसिद्ध लेखक श्री वेदराही के पिता के नाते अधिक और पत्रकार के नाते कम जानती थी। 1974 में जब इन्हें पद्मश्री की उपाधि मिली और बंबई में डोगरा कल्चरल अकादमी की तरफ़ से जब हमने इनका स्वागत किया, तब इनके व्यक्तित्व की कई गिरहें खुलीं। उस समय बोलते हुए लेखक स्व0 किशनचंदर जी ने कहा था, सराफ़ साहब ने सराफ़ होकर भी कभी सोने चांदी का भाव नहीं किया और हमेशा उस सोने के क़ायल रहे जो लफ़्जों में छिपा रहता है, और जम्मूं के पत्रकार डा0 निशात ने कहा था हम सब ने पत्रकारिता सराफ़ साहब के कदमों में बैठ कर सीखी है। अगर ये कहा जाये कि जम्मू कश्मीर में पत्रकारिता का युग सराफ़ साहब के प्रयत्नों से आरंभ हुआ तो कोई ज्यादती न होगी। स्वभाव से नम्र सराफ़ साहब सिर्फ मुस्कुरा भर दिये थे। उसके बाद सार भर पहिले जम्मूं में जब ये घर पर मुझसे मिलने आये तो मैं हस्बेमामूल घर न थी। तब मैं जिनके घर गई थी उनकी खड़ी और सीधी तीन छत की सीढ़ियां दनादन चढ़कर सराफ़ साहब एक ही सांस में ऊपर आ गये थे। मैंने शर्मसार होकर उनसे माफ़ी मांगी थी। और वे आराम से कुर्सी पर बैठकर उस घर की बहू को चाय न बनाने के लिए कहते रहे थे। मुझे बहुत शर्मिंदा होते देखकर उन्होंने कहा था, तुम्हें एक लतीफ़ा सुनाते हैं, एक शख्स ने मुझसे पूछा आपकी उम्र कितनी होगी। मैंने कहा यही चालीस पैंतालीस के लगभग होगी। वो थोड़ा नाराज़ होकर बोला, साठ के करीब तो आपके बड़े पुत्र है। आप चालीस पैंतालीस के कैसे हुए। मैंने कहा गुस्सा क्यों करते हो। गिनती तो तुमने सीखी होगी जोड़ कर देख लो चालीस और पैंतालीस कितने होते हैं। तब कमरे में बैठे सब लोग देर तक हंसते रहे थे।

by

Padma Sachdev, eminant multi-lingual writer and poetess who has the rare distinction of roping in melody Queen Lata Mangeshkar to sing Dogri Songs.

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उन्हीं दिनों सराफ़ साहब की धर्मपत्नी बीमार थीं। मैं उन्हें देखने गई। मैंने सुन रखा था वो बड़ी दबंग औरत हैं। मैं डर–डर कर उनका हाल पूछ रही थी। उनकी आंख के कौन से इशारे से एक स्त्री मेरे आगे देसी चाय का प्याला रख गई ये मैं न जान पाई। उन्होंने चाय पर तैरती इलायचियों को संतोष से देखा और अपने पलंग के पीछे की अलमारी में से एक डिब्बा निकाला। उसमें से बादाम की कुछ गिरियां मेरी प्लेट में डाल दीं और अपनी रौबदार पर ममत्व से भरी आवाज़ में कहने लगी ये गिरियां मैं सराफ़ साहब के लिए निकाल कर रखती हूं। बादाम की एक–एक गिरी मुंह में रखते समय उनके महत्वपूर्ण होने के आभास के साथ–साथ मुझे ये भी लग रहा था कि मैं सराफ़ साहब का हिस्सा खा रही हूं। प्लेट पर रखी गिरियों पर उनकी नज़र भी थी इसलिए बिना खाये भी छोड़ न सकती थी। जितनी देर मैं बैठी रही उन्होंने जो भी दो–चार बातें की वो सराफ़ साहब के बारे में ही थीं। उन दिनों वेद राही भी अपनी मां को देखने आये हुए थे। दरवाज़े तक मुझे छोड़ने आये तो कहने लगे डाक्टर ने इन्हें हिलने डुलने से मना किया है पर ये सुबह उठकर नहा धोकर ही चारपाई पर लेटती है। इस बारे में सराफ़ साहब का आग्रह भी दम तोड़ देता है। हृदय रोग में हिलना डुलना मना है। पर इनकी दिनचर्या से इन्हें कोई नहीं रोक सकता।

उसके बाद जब सराफ़ साहब से भेंट हुई तब वो पाकिस्तान से होकर आये थे। और वहां गुज़ारे चंद दिनों की यादों से भरे हुए थे। उनसे मिलकर गुज़िरता दिनों का जो खजाना मैंने उलट कर देखा तो मुझे यूं लगा जैसे वक़्त पर आलती पालती मारे सांप को भगाकर मैंने धरती में दबे सुंदर क्षण देख लिए हों। मेरी उत्सुकता बढ़ती गई। मेरे आग्रह पर सराफ़ साहब ने पचहत्तर बरस पहिले के ग्यारह साल की उम्र के लड़के के बारे में मुझे बताना शुरू किया जिसे प्यार से घर के लोग मुल्खो कहते थे। उन दिनों भारत में प्रिंस आफ़ वेल्ज़ आने वाले थे। इसी खुशी में स्कूलों में मिठाई बंटने लगी थी। मिठाई के लालच में सराफ़ों का ये लड़का ग्यारह साल की उम्र में स्कूल में भरती हो गया। फिर लफ़्ज़ों की गुलकारी में ऐसी सुंदर बस्तियां दिखाई दीं जिनके आगे मां बाप द्वारा नियत भविष्य एकदम फीका लगने लगा। दिन और रात लफ़्ज़ों और पन्नों में डूब गये। उस लड़के के दोस्त का बाप पोस्टमैन था। लाहौर से अखबार आते थे। धीरे–धीरे मिठाई से ज़्यादा लालच अखबार का हो गया। जब तक पूरी अख़बार न पढ़ता मन छटपटाता रहता। अख़बारों की सुर्खियां आंखों में छातीं। और अखबार के बारे में महबूबा की तरह सैकड़ों ख्याल दिमाग में तैरते रहते। और–और किताबे पढ़ने का लालच होने लगा। सांबा से आठ मील दूर पुरमंडल गांव में लगने वाले चैत्र चतुर्थी के मेले आंखों से ओझल होते गये और उनकी जगह आनेवाले दिनों के ख्वाबों की ताबीर ने ले ली। पढ़ने का जोश अपने तक ही सीमित न रहा। एक हलवाई के बच्चों को खाली समय में पढ़ाने लगे। उसके बदले में हलवाई की दूध भरी कढ़ाई में से मोटी भेंसिया मलाई खाने को मिलती।

सांबा कस्बे के पास बहने वाली बसंतर नदी में बचपन में लकड़ियां पकड़ने आया करते थे। अब उसे पार करके जम्मूं जाने लगे। मैट्रिक करने के बाद जम्मूं के प्रिंस आफ़ वेल्ज़ कालेज में दाखिल हो गये। मिठाई के लालच में स्कूल में दाखिला लेनेवाला लड़का हर साल स्कालरशिप लेकर पढ़ने लगा। जम्मूं बोर्डिंग में रहते। हर शनिवार को पैदल सांबा आते। रविवार वहां काटते और सोमवार को सुबह पांच बजे फिर पैदल जम्मूं की तरफ चल देते। पांच घंटे में चालीस किलोमीटर का सफ़र बड़ा अच्छा लगता। दस बजे तक कालेज पहुंच जाते। रास्ते में तीन–तीन गगरियां उठाये अंधेरे में घूंघट निकाले औरतें पानी भरने जा रही होतीं। कोई कोई बसंतर में नहाने भी आती थी। पर ये भी डर रहता था कि कहीं राजा के आदमी किसी को उठाकर न ले जायें। सड़क पर अंधेरा रहता। साथ में दोस्त रहता काकासिंह समेयाल। वो इनका लंगोटिया यार था। उसकी संगति में पढ़ने की ललक बढ़ गयी थी। जैसे जैसे पौ फटती चहकती चिढ़ियों के काफिले संग हो लेते। रास्ते में किसी किसी दुकान पर धुआँ उठता और यो सोच कर कदम तेज हो जाते कि अगली दुकान पर जरूर पकौड़ियां निकल रही होंगी। रास्ते में बामणें दी बड़ी पड़ाव आता

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था। वहां रुक कर थोड़ा विश्राम करते। कुछ खाते पीते और चल निकलते। तब जम्मूं में तवी नदी पर बना पुल पार करने का एक पैसा लगता था। सैर करने वालों पर ये टैक्स न था। आप दोनों ऐसे ही जाते जैसे सैर से लौट रहे हों। पैसा बचाकर लगता जैसे बड़ी भारी जंग जीत ली हो। पर काकासिंह ने साथ न दिया। अभी फर्स्ट इयर ही में थे जब एक दिन जम्मू से सांबा जाते रास्ते में उसके पेट मे शूल उठा और सांबा तक उसे पहुंचाना कठिन हो गया घर पहुंचते ही उसने दम तोड़ दिया। तब ये सफर उतना सुंदर न रहा।

कालेज में लाइब्रेरी में किताबें रसाले और पत्रिकाएं नये दोस्तों के रूप में मिलतीं। पढ़ने लिखनेवालों से विचारों का आदान प्रदान भी होता। वहीं धीरे-धीरे लिखने का भी शौक हो गया। 1916 में कालेज मैगज़ीन में आपने पहिला लेख लिखा। उसके बाद लाहौर में छपनेवाली पत्रिकाओं में भी लिखना शुरू कर दिया। तब जम्मूं कश्मीर से काई अखबार या पत्रिका न निकलती थी। इस बात का सराफ़ साहब को बड़ा दुःख था। एक बार कालेज में प्रोफेसर ने इनसे पूछा, बड़े होकर तुम क्या करना चाहते हो। आपने झट से उत्तर दिया मैं रियासत में चार काम करना चाहूंगा –

1 अखबार निकालना
2 युनिवर्सिटी कायम करना
3 लैजिस्लेटिव कौंसिल कायम करना
4 बैंक खोलना

तब प्रोफेसर साहब ने व दूसरे विद्यार्थियों ने इसे डींग हांकना ही समझा होगा। पर सराफ़ साहब ने पहिला अखबार भी निकाला और बाकी कामों में भी सक्रिय भाग लिया।

बी0 ए0 करने के बाद आपने लौहार के लॉ कालेज में दाखिला लिया। लाहौर तब राजनीतिक गहमागहमी का गढ़ था। बड़े-बड़े नेताओं के भाषण होते थे। हर भाषण सुनने के बाद जब सराफ़ साहब घर आते तब बैठकर सोचते जब जम्मूं में अखबार निकाल कर वो ये सब छापेंगे तब उन सब लोगों को पता चलेगा दुनिया में क्या हो रहा है। वो लोग जो बर्फ में जमी डल लेक के नीचे दचैड़ती मछलियों की तरह ऊपरी सतह पर होने वाली हलचल से बेखबर है। अखबार निकालने का भूत तलब की तरह बढ़ता गया। उन्हीं दिनों अपनी मेल मुलाकात व प्रतिमा की बदौलत लाला लाजपतराय ने इन्हें अपने अखबार बंदे मातरम में उप संपादक रख लिया। आज़ादी के लिए जद्योजहद हो रही थी। इस वातावरण में आपके मन में रियासत में अखबार निकालने की कसक ने और जोर पकड़ा। लाहौर में छपने वाले सभी अखबार जम्मूं जाते थे। उनमें लगातार छपते रहने से सराफ़ साहब को रियासत के सभी पढ़े लिखें लोग जानते थे। पर आप तो उन लोगों के लिए अखबार निकालना चाहते थे जिनकी दुकानों से बहुत सुबह धुंआ उठता था। जिनकी बहु बेटियां पानी की कमी की वजह से मुंह अंधेरे तीन तीन गगरियां उठाते मीलों दूर पानी भरने जाती थी। जो मेहनतकश थे। जो अपने खेत में उठी गेंहू की बालियों का हिसाब न रख पाते थे।

इन दिनों रियासत में महाराजा प्रताप सिंह जी का राज्य था। उनके दरबार में सराफ़ साहब ने अर्ज़ी देकर अखबार की इजाज़त चाही। इस अर्ज़ी का एक साल बाद जवाब आया। दरबार आपकी इस दरख्वास्त पर गौर करने को भी तैयार नहीं। इस कागज़ पर सरकारी मुहर थी। तीन साल लगातार दरख्वास्तें देते रहने के बाद चौथे साल आपको अखबार निकालने की इजाज़त मिल गई। कुफ्र टूटा खुदा खुदा करके। अखबार की इजाज़त मिलने से पहिले खुफिया तौर पर सराफ़ साहब की छानबीन भी हुई। इस समय आप तीस बरस के थे।

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अखबार का नाम रणवीर रखा गया। महाराजा प्रताप सिंह जी के पिताजी का नाम रणवीर सिंह था और इसका अर्थ रण का वीर भी था। ये रियासत का पहला अखबार था। जिसके लिए सराफ़ साहब ने बरसों ख्वाब देखे थे। इजाज़त मिलते ही वो मंसूबे जो रात को सोने के पहिले, सड़क पर चलते फिरते व लोगों से बातचीत करते समय बांधे जाते थे उन्हें पूरा करने का वक़्त आ गया था। झट से एक कच्चा मकान किराये पर ले लिया गया। जब पैसों की समस्या दरपेश हुई। पत्नी ने अपने सारे गहने सराफ़ साहब के आगे लाकर रख दिये, रुमाल में गहने बांध कर सराफ़ साहब अपने दोस्त श्री विश्वनाथ बठैरा को साथ लेकर वजीर तेजराम के पास गये। श्री बढ़ैरा वज़ीर तेजराम के मोहतविर थे। सराफ़ साहब के रुमाल में बंधे गहनों की ढेरी वजीर साहब के आगे लगा दी। उन्होंने गहने लिए हुंडी लिखवाकर दो हजार रुपये सराफ़ साहब को दे दिये। बढ़ैरा साहब अखबार के जर्नल मैनेजर हुए और दोनों अखबार का सामान खरीदने सियालकोट निकल गये।

उन दिनों अखबार की पहिली प्रति क़ातिब लिखते थे। इसके बाद उस प्रति को पत्थर पर जमाया जाया जाता था। ये पत्थर लाहौर से आता था और बड़ा कीमती होता था। इस पर क़ातिबी कागज़ जमाया जाता था और फिर तीन–तीन पहलवान रोलर फिराकर उसकी हज़ार–हज़ार कापी निकालते थे। इस काम में बड़ा ज़ोर लगता था। ये पहलवान सरकारी छापखाने में नौकरी करते थे। वहां से छुट्टी मिलने पर रात के बारह बजे तक अखबार का काम करते थे।

इस अखबार की कीमत एक आना रखी गई। सालाना चंदा चार रुपये था। अखबार की जब पहिली प्रति निकली तो लोगों ने उसे ऐसे चाव से देखा जैसे भूखों को रोटी मिल गई हो। पांच–पांच छः गांव में एक अखबार जाता जिसे सुनने सब लोग इकट्ठे होते। एक आदमी खबरें सुनाता और लोग कंबल में लिपटे नीम की दांतुन चबाते सतर्क कानों से खबरें सुनते और उस पर बहस करते। अखबार हाथों हाथ बिकने लगा। पहिले दो महीनीं में ही वज़ीर तेजराम जी के दो हजार रुपये चुकता कर दिये गये।

इस अखबार का पता पहाड़ियों के उस पार भी लगा। मशहूर लेखक मुंशी प्रेमचंद जी ने कहा जम्मूं जैसे पहाड़ी इलाके में ऐसा अखबार निकालना गनीमत है।

रियासत में निकनले वाले इस पहिले अखबार को दरबार भी नज़र अंदाज न कर सका। रोज अखबार रणवीर दरबार में पढ़कर सुनाया जाता। लोगों की रुचि बनाये रखने के लिए इसमें कुछ मसालेदार खबरें भी रहती थी। दरबार में खबरें बड़ी दिलचस्पी से सुनी जातीं थी।

उन दिनों महाराज के रसोईघर में जो रसोइये खाना पकाते थे वो अपने साथ हुक्का भी ले जाते थे। हुक्के के पेंदे में जहां पानी भरा जाता है आते समय वो पानी फेंक कर उसमें घी भर कर लाया करते। रणवीर में ये खबर छप गई। सरकार ने ये खबर पढ़कर सराफ़ साहब को बुला भेजा। सरकार याद कर रहे हैं, ये जानकर आप दरबार में हाज़िर हुए। थोडी दूर जाकर बैठ गये। महाराज ने थोड़ करीब होने को कहा। ये थोड़ा खिसके। उन्होंने और करीब बुलाया और पास बिठाकर सरगोशी में कहा पता थो मिगी बी हा, पर लिखेया तूं याने पता तो मुझे भी था, पर लिखा तुमने। फिर दीवान से मुखातिब होकर कहा इसे खिलअत दो। चूंकि ख़िलवत तैयार न थी उसके एवज में इन्हें सौ रुपये दिये गये। दरबारियों पर रौब गालिब हो गया। मैंने महाराजा प्रतापसिंह जी के बारे में सुना रखा था के वो बहुत बड़ी पगडी पहिनते थे। खिलके कुरते के नीचे दोहरे पायजामें की डोरी हमेशा लटकती रहती थी। अफ़ीम के नशे में रहते थे इसलिए दरबारियों के कंधों पर हाथ रख कर चलते थे। सराफ साहब से मैंने असलियत जाननी चाही वो झट से बोले, नहीं ऐसा न था। ये बातें यूं ही फैलाई जाती थी। दरअसल वो बड़े ही हाज़िर जवाब और दाता पुरुष थे। ओर फिर बातचीत का सिलसिला अखबार से हटकर दरबार तक जा पहुंचा। पत्रकारों की जगह मुसाहिबों की बातें होने लगीं। सराफ़ साहब ने कहा, महाराजा के मुसाहिबों ने जिन्हें आजकल भाषा में चमचा कहा जाता है, एक बार

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महाराजा साहब को पानी पर टैक्स लगाने को कहा। हंस कर महाराज बोले अच्छा तो अस हुन झीर बी बनी गै। अच्छा तब हम पानी भरने वाले भी बन गये। बात वहीं दब गई। और घटना सराफ साहब ने बताई। उन दिनों महारानियां पर्दे में रहती थी। रियासत की देखभाल के लिए अंग्रेज रैज़ीडेंट हुआ करते थे। वहां के रैज़ीडेंट की मेम को रनिवास का शौक हुआ। रैज़िडेंट ने खबर भिजवा दी। सब सोच में डूब गये। उन दिनों रैज़िडेंट को कोई नाराज़ न कर पाता था। दीवान ने डरते–डरते महाराजा से कहा। महाराजा तो अंग्रेज के साथ हाथ मिलाने के बाद गंगाजल से हाथ धोते थे। रनिवास में अगर मेम घुस जाती तो सारा महल ही धोना पडता। महल की स्त्रियों को कपड़ों समेंत नहाना पड़ता। थोड़ा चुप रह कर महाराजा बोले घबराने की क्या बात है। रैजिडेंट से कहो मेम को भेज दे। पर एक बार महल में घुसने के बाद फिर कोई स्त्री महल के बाहर नहीं जाती ये हमारी रीति है। इसके बाद रैज़िडेंट ने कभी अंतःपुर का जिक्र तक न किया।

मैंने सराफ साहब से पूछा क्या एकबार अखबार निकालने के बाद आपको कोई मुश्किल पेश नहीं आई? वो बोलें 1924 में अखबार पर मुकदमा चला। अखबार थोड़ देर के लिए बंद भी रहा पर आखिर जीत सराफ़ साहब की साफगोई ही की हुई। 1934 में इन्होंने बच्चों के लिए एक पत्रिका शुरू की। जिसका नाम रत्न रखा गया। रियासत में कानून ढीले हो जाने पर और भी अखबार निकलने लगे थे। पर बच्चों की ये पहिली पत्रिका थी जो सारे हिन्दुस्तान में मक़बूल हुई। हर वर्ष तब युवराज कर्णसिंह जी के जन्मदिन पर कर्ण नंबर निकलता था जिसके लिए लोग इंतजार करते रहते थे। सराफ़ साहब ने बड़े खुश होकर बताया कि डा0 कर्णसिंह भी ये नंबर अपनी लायब्रेरी में रखा करते थे। मेरे ये पूछने पर कि आपके अखबार से जनता सिर्फ राजनीतिक गतिविधियों की जानकारी ही हासिल कर सकी या कोई और फायदा भी लोगों को हुआ। तब सराफ़ साहब ने कहा डोगरे पहाड़ी लोग सीधे साधे मेहनतकश या फ़ौजी होते थे। समाज में कितनी कुरीतियाँ थी। हम चाहते थे इनके बारे में लिखें तो हो सकता है ये कुरीतियां खत्म चाहे न हों पर कम हो जायें। तब छोटे–छोटे लड़के तमाखू पीते थे। ज्यों ही कोई बड़ा कमरे में हुक्का छोड़ कर निकला किसी छोटे ने झट से मुंह से नली लगा ली। सड़क पर पड़े सिगरेट के छोटे–छोटे टुकड़ों को मुंह में रख कर चिमटे से कोयला पकड़े उसे जलाने की कोशिश में मुंह नाक या हाथ पैर जला लिए। लड़कियों को पैदा होते ही दफ़ना दिया जाता था। ज्यों ही गर्भवती स्त्री को प्रसवपीडा होती थी घर के पिछवाड़े में एक कब्र खोद दी जाती थी। अगर लड़का होता था तो बिहाइंया गाई जातीं अगर लड़की होती तो गर्भ से निकलते ही गर्त में डाल दी जाती। ये चलन राजपूतों में अधिक था। वो अपने से छोटी जातिवालों की बेटियाँ ले तो लेते थे पर अपनी बेटी अपनी हैसियतवालों को ही देते थे। जो राजपूत दरबार में या फ़ौज में होते थे वो हल चलाने वाले राजपूतों के घर बेटी न देते थे। ये रस्म तब के महाराजा श्री हरिसिंह जी ने खुद हल चलाकर, किसानों के साथ एक पंगत में खाना खाकर तोड़ी। पहिली बेटी बलदेवसिंह जी ने हल चलाने वालों के घर दी। फिर द्वार खुल गए। ये सभी खबरें अखबार में छपती थी। और दूर दराज पहाड़ी गांव तक भले ही देर से पहुंचे पर पहुंचती थी। सुबह बावड़ी पर नहाती, फिर मंदिर में पीतल के कलसों से शिवजी को चढ़ाने जल ले कर जातीं, शाम को कुएं पर पानी लाती औरतें मर्दों से सुनी खबरों पर बहस मुबाहिसे करतीं। इसके अलावा तब रियासत में कंडी के इलाकों में पानी न मिलता था। मीलों दूर बरसात में पानी की जोहड़ रहते जिनका पानी पीने से लंबे लंबे कीड़े जिस्म में हो जाते या गलग्रंह निकलते इन सब बातों की तरफ सरकार की तवज्जोह दिलवाई गई। कुछ लोगों ने कुंए खुदवाये यज्ञ किये। और पुण्यकार्य में शामिल हो जाने के बाद में काम बड़े पैमाने पर हुए। फिर बख्शी गुलाम मुहम्मद जब रियासत के प्रधानमंत्री बने तो उन्होंने कंडी इलाकों में पानी का बड़ा अच्छा इंतजाम किया। छोटी उम्र की शादी और दोहरी की शादी के रिवाज में भी कमी हुई। बेगार को लेकर भी अखबार में बड़ी खबरें छपती थी। उन दिनों कोई डर से बाजार सौदा सुल्फ़ लेने न जाता था। अहलकार देखते ही बेगार में घर लेते थे। सराफ़ साहब ने बताया

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एक व्यक्ति अपनी मां के लिए दवाई लेने बाज़ार गया तो बेगार के तीन दिन बाद जब घर लौटा तो उसकी मां का दाह संस्कार भी हो चुका था। ऐसी खबरें छपने घर लोगों में बेदारी तो आती ही थी इसके अलावा रणवीर का दफ्तर साहित्यिक व राजनीतिक गतिविधियों का अड्डा भी था। डोगरी साहित्य के बानी पंडित हरदत शास्त्री यहां दफ्तर में ही कितने बरस रहे। उनके पास दीनूभाई पंत व और लोग भी आते रहते थे। हरदत्त जी की रचानाएं रणवीर में छपा करतीं। शेख़ अबदुल्ला भी यहाँ आठ–आठ नौ–नौ घंटे बैठे रहते। तब ये लड़के से थे। जनता से परिचित होना चाहते थे। लोग इन्हें पेशावर एजीटेटर कहा करते थे।

बटवारे के दिनों में तो लोगों का जमघट लगा ही रहता थां बाहर से अखबार आने बंद हो गये थे। रणवीर का बड़ा ख़ातिब यकीन अली मिस्कीन फ़ैसलाबाद भाग गया। तब वेद राही जो तेरह चौदह बरस के ही थे बड़े काम के साबित हुए। कातिबों के पास लिखना सीखना इनका शुगल था। और इस मौके छः महीने तक इन्ही के हाथ का लिखा अखबार छपता रहा। तब वेद जी कहने लगे हरकारे अखबार बेचकर झोलियों में भर कर छुट्टे पैसे लाते थे। इनकी मां एक बड़े संदूक में वो पैसा रखा करती। ज्यों ही काई बेटा पैसे मांगता मुट्ठी भर दे देती। इसके अलावा जगह जगह छीको पर भी छुट्टे पैसों की गठरियां लटकती रहतीं। उन दिनों अखबार बहुत बिकता था। क़ातिबों के अलासा और कितने ही लोग पाकिस्तान भाग गये। मैं तभी से कोशिश कर रहा था कि पाकिस्तान जाकर अपने अखबार के बिछड़े परिवार से मिलूं। पत्रकारिता के सिससिले में आप रूस, चीन, कोरिया, फिन्लैंड वगैरा गये सिर्फ वहीं न जा सके जहां कितने ही वो साथी थे जिन्होंने रियासत का पहिला अखबार निकालने के लिए सराफ़ साहब के हाथ मजबूत किये थे। उन्होंने कहा मैं उन सब को मिलना चाहता था। सियालकोट की वो गलियां देखना चाहता था जहां से हर हफ्ते मैं अपने अखबार के लिए कागज लाता था। वहां जाकर वो गिरिजाघर देखना चाहता था जिसका क्रास जम्मूं में राजा के महल की ऊंची छत से दिखाई देता है। और उन लोगों के चेहरे फिर से देखना चाहता था जो कभी मेंरे परिवार के सदस्य थे। आखिर इस बरस पाकिस्तान जाने की इज़ाज़त मिल ही गई। और अपनी कोशिशों के बाद मैंने पाया कि अमृतसर से लाहौर जाने वाली ट्रेन पर मैं अकेला गांधी टोपी में लैस भारतीय बैठा हुआ था। काफी देर तक टिकट चेकर मुझे घूर–घूर कर देखता रहा। वो पाकिस्तान का रोज़ाना अखबार मशरिक पढ़ रहा था। थोड़ी देर बाद मेंरे पास आ बैठा। कश्मीर का जिक्र शुरू हुआ। उसने कहा भारत व पाकिस्तान में आना जाना शुरू होने से पहले दिलोदिमाग का रास्ता खुलना निहायत ज़रूरी है। सारा रास्ता इसी विषय पर बातचीत होती रही। ट्रेन रुकी तो वो मेरे लाख मना करने पर भी सारा सामान उठा कर स्टेशन मास्टर के कमरे में छोड़ आया। और मेरे मेज़बान जब काफी देर तक फोन पर न मिले तो स्टेशन मास्टर ने मुझे अपने कमरे में बिठाकर उनका इंतज़ार करने को कहा। उसे क्या मालूम था बटवारे से पहिले मैं यहाँ वैसे ही आया करता था जैसे जम्मूं से सांबा जाया करता था। जिस स्टेशन पर रात के दो बजे मैं तन्हा खड़ा था कभी वो मेरे घर से कम न था। वहां मैं ऐसे ही आकर खड़ा होता था जैसे मनुष्य अपने गांव के चौपाल पर जाकर खड़ा होता है। सराफ़ साहब फिर भावुक होकर कहने लगे लेकिन लाहौर में अपने मेज़वान के घर जहां मैं पंद्रह दिन रहा मुझे कभी ये अहसास नहीं हुआ कि मैं अपने किसी बेटे के घर में नहीं रुका हुआ हूं। उनकी बीबी मुझे पिताजी पिताजी कहती। उसकी बेटियां हर वक्त मेरी जरूरतों का ख़्याल रखतीं। वहां वेद राही को लोग फिल्मी लेखक के नाते से जानते हैं।

अमृतसर से वहां लोगों ने टी० वी० पर पवित्र पापी फिल्म देखी थी। उनकी लड़की ने पूछा वेद भैय्या की लड़कियां कितनी बड़ी हैं। मैंने कहा तुम्हारी हम उम्र ही होंगी। वो ये सुन कर झट से अंदर गई और एक खुबसूरत तोहफा मेरी पोती के लिए ले आई। मैंने कहा तुम तो उसे जानती भी नहीं हो फिर इतना कीमती तोहफ़ा क्यों भेज रही हो। उसने ये कह कर मुझे निरुत्तर कर दिया वो भी आपकी पोती है मैं भी आपकी पोती हूं इससे बढ़कर और क्या जानकारी हो सकती है। इसके बाद वो भारत

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में अपनी उम्र के बच्चों के बारे में पूछती रही। सराफ़ साहब कहने लगे आज के बच्चे भिन्न–भिन्न धर्मों रीति रिवाजों व हैसियतों के पीछे नहीं भागते। उनका धर्म है मुहब्बत और इंसानियत। और ये बड़ी अच्छी बात है। एक दूसरे से मीलों दूर रहने वाले ये बच्चे आज एक ही तरह से सोचते हैं। एक दूसरे को ख़त लिखते हैं और एक दूसरे से मिलने की ख्वाहिश रखते हैं।

पाकिस्तान में एक दिन भी ये न लगा मैं गैर मुल्क में हूं। वहां सभी तो अपने थे। फिर आप फ़ैसलाबाद में अपने क़ातिब से भी मिलने गये। उसके बाद सियालकोट भी गये। वहां पर एक शख्स ने इनकी पीठ देखकर ही इन्हें पहचान लिया। और सड़क पर ही बगलगीर हो गया। सियालकोट में ये एक बीमार दोस्त को देखने पहुंचे। उसने कितने महीनों के बाद चारपाई पर बैठ कर कहा आपके सियालकोट आने से मेरी ही नहीं हम सब के सेहत बेहतर हो गई है। वहां जो भी मिलता यूं लगता जैसे एक ही नदी की धारा थोड़ी दूर मुड़ कर फिर नदी में आ मिली हो।

लाहौर में जम्मू के लोगों की एक मीटिंग हर हफ्ते होती है। इस बार की मीटिंग सराफ़ साहब के आने की खुशी में थोड़े दिन जल्दी रखी गई। उसमें सियालकोट तक से लोग आए। वहां डोगरी बोलने का मुकाबिला हुआ। एक शख़्स ने सराफ़ साहब को डोगर दोहरा पायजामा चूम कर कहा हमने बत्तीस बरस बाद ये पोशाक देखी है। इस मीटिंग में वहां के डोगरे–डोगरी अदब के बारे में बातचीत करते रहे। सराफ़ साहब ने कहा पाकिस्तान में मार्शल ला होते हुए भी मुझे कहीं कोई फौजी न दिखाई दिया। लोग राजनीतिक शोर शराबे से दूर अपने रोजमर्रा कामों में उलझे हुए थे। महंगाई वहां बहुत ज्यादा थी। पायजामा इस्तरी करने के मुझसे पांच रुपये ले गया।

लाहौर के कई अख़बारों में सराफ़ साहब के बारे में छपा। जान पहचान वालों का तांता लग गया। बरसों बाद वहीं जाने पहचाने चेहरे बरसों की धूल चेहरों में छुपाए पास आकर बैठ गये। तब एक पल के लिए भी ये न लगा कि हम कभी बिछड़े भी थे।

सराफ़ साहब की पत्नी का हृदयरोग से स्वर्गवास हो गया। वो सराफ़ साहब की पत्नी कम दोस्त ज्यादा थीं। कहने लगे मेरी ख्वाहिश थी उन्हें भी साथ लेकर पाकिस्तान जाता। और अगर वो साथ न भी जातीं तो भी मेरे मेज़वानों के घर उनके लिखवाएं हुए पत्र पहुंच जाते। जहां मैं अकेला जाता था वहीं वो किसी हिदायतों से भरा पत्र लिखवा कर डाल देती थी। इतने बजे ये देना, सुबह उठते ही दूध में बादाम खसखस चार मगज़। दोपहर को ये शाम को वो। अक्सर बादाम वो मेरे सामान में ही बांध देती थी। सारी उम्र मटन खाने के लिए मना करती रहीं। मैंने न छोड़ा। उनकी मृत्यु के बाद न खाया गया। पाकिस्तान में सब्जियां सिर्फ मेरे लिए पकती रहीं। वहां के लोग ज़्यादा मटन ही खाते हैं। 85 साल तक मटन खाया। उनकी मृत्यु के बाद उनका मुसलसल इसरार याद आया तो फिर खाया ही न गया। जो लोग सामने रहते हैं उनकी बात तो टाली जा सकती हैं। पर मरनेवालों की बात कैसे टालें। क्यों कर टालें।

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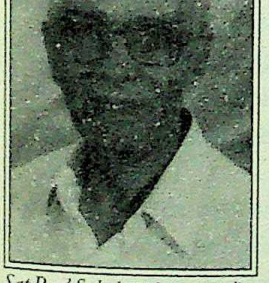
TRANSFORMATION OF LADAKH

by



Sat Paul Sahni, senior journalist, enthusiastic shutter bug, served as Director General Information, Public Relations, Tourist Publicity, J&K.

Transformation of Ladakh from medieval to modern has been brought about in about 50 years. Surely, it is incredible achievement, unprecedented and unimaginable in the circumstances obtaining in this landlocked trans-Himalayan region of India.

When India became independent in 1947, Ladakh region was cut off not only physically from the rest of India but also in every other field of human activity except in religion and culture. There was not even an inch of proper road though there were bridle paths and trade routes in existence for centuries. Caravans of donkeys, horses, camels and yaks laden with precious goods and commodities had traversed these routes year after year for over two millennia. Thousands of Moslems from Central Asia had passed through to undertake annual Haj pilgrimage and Buddhist lamas and scholars had traveled south to Kashmir and beyond and towards east to Tibet in pursuit of knowledge and religious study and pilgrimage. Means of communication were old, slow and out-moded. Postal service was still through runners and there was a single telegraph line operated through Morse code signals. There were no telephones, no newspapers no bus services, no electricity, no hospitals, not many schools, no colleges, no water taps.

The administration in Ladakh was double-colonial. The Kashmir Durbar for 120 years or so had not overcome the "heady feeling" of having conquered Ladakh. General Zorawar Singh's conquest of Ladakh in 1834-41 created a gulf which failed to heal; mistruct still prevailed. No Ladakhi for over a century was recruited in State's Armed Forces and other than being petty revenue officials, they did not have any hand in administration. Then there was the superimposition of the British Joint Commissioner at Leh who controlled ingress and egress out of Ladakh and the trade with Tibet and Central Asia. He in fact represented the British Resident at Srinagar.

In Western Ladakh, because of British Empire's imperial interests, the British Indian Government had for long pressured Kashmir Durbar to hand over control of Gilgit Agency to New Delhi. In 1935, from Kashmir Maharaja, the British took over the strategic Gilgit Agency on 60 years lease. Since the British Paramountcy

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was to lapse with Indian Independence in August 1947, the British gave back the leased area to Kashmir Maharaja on 1st August 1947. From Srinagar, Brig. Ghansara Singh was sent as Governor of Gilgit. The British before withdrawing from Gilgit had sown seeds of revolt and hatred among the local chieftains of the region. The locally raised force, Gilgit Scouts, officered by British officers had been got ready and given proper training. This was used to overthrow the new administration. Within a week of the Pakistani invasion of Kashmir on 22nd October, the revolt was engineered at Gilgit. The Moslem elements of the Kashmir State forces' 6 Bat J&K Rifles defected and joined rebels under Gilgit Scouts Commander Major Brown. The rebels arrested the Governor, Brig. Ghnsara Singh and his loyal officials and took control of the entire regions. There was large-scale massacre of non-Moslems of the area including the soldiers. Pakistani flag was raised in Gilgit on 3rd November 1947, by Major Brown and Pakistan Government was "requested" to take over the control of the entire territory. With Gilgit and Bunji under occupation of Pakistan, the rest of Ladakh region had for its defence 3 small garrisons at Skardu, Kargil and Leh under the overall command of Lt. Col. Sher Jung Thappa. What would defence of over 80,000 sq. kms of area in hands of less than 200 soldiers, be like? In April 1948, Drass and Kargil were over-run by Pakistanis and Skardu Garrison was encircled and besieged till it was forced to surrender to avoid brutal massacre like what happened to JAK Rifles soldiers at Bunji in October/November 1947. Pakistani troops having cutt off lands access from Kashmir Valley, started advancing towards Leh up the Indus Valley and from Khaplu in Baltistan into Nubra Valley. Through a daring pioneering unchartered flight from Srinagar to Leh in May 1948 the air route was opened and in next few days urgently required troops were airlifted. Overcoming heavy natural odds and crossing series of snow covered passes between Manali in Himachal (then Punjab) and Indus Valley, two columns of Indian soldiers marched into Leh in July 1948 to strengthen the defences of Ladakh. But the stellar role was played by the people of Indus Valley and the Nubra Valley who raised volunteer force to defend their motherland. It was provided arms and given parliamentary training and they fought bravely, shoulders to shoulder with the professional soldiers of the Indian Army. In due course, with humble beginning, Ladakhi youth showed courage and valour, discipline and commitment and in less than half a century had attained fame and acclaim and secured for themselves the enviable status of a regular Regiment of the Indian Army – the proud Ladakh Scouts.

In about half a century the Ladakh region has developed rapidly and progressed fast to become an area which in no way is behind any other Himalayan region. Today, it has the Trans-Himalayan Highway connecting it with Kashmir Valley on one side and Himachal Pradesh on the other. It has a network of roads giving access to remote and borders areas. It boasts of world's 3 highest motorable roads at Khardung La (18,380 ft), Thagland La (17,550 ft) and Chang La (17,350 ft). besides many airstrips, landing fields and helipads Ladakh has a modern airport at Leh (12,000 ft.) having regular flights operating to

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Srinagar, Jammu, Chandigarh and Delhi. Telecommunication has been modernized with latest high-tech systems including of laying optic fibre underground cables and satellite phones for the armed forces. In Leh there are scores of cybercafes and hundreds of computers with Internet connections. Over a thousands taxicabs in Leh and hundreds of passenger buses cater to needs of residents and tourists. There are nearly 300 hotels of different categories and lodges patronized by nearly 20,000 tourists — foreign and domestic during the summers. Over the years tourism had flourished and brought in precious foreign exchange. Electricity is available in towns and in most of villages. Leh and some towns have water supply through taps.

Polo and archery have been traditional sports but the first places in the country where Ice-Hockey was introduced was in Ladakh and for the past 5-6 years National Championship are held regularly. Country's highest Golf Course is located at Leh. For past twenty years or so soccer and cricket is also being played at over 12,000 ft. Contact with foreigners, education and exposure to the world has affected and changed their lifestyle, influenced customs, dress and even food habits. Now there are banks and modern business establishments. Shops and stores are overflowing with goods from all over the world and are crowded most of working hours. Efforts at afforestation and application of improved and new techniques and new practices has changed the face of Ladakh, which till recently was called the high-altitude arctic desert. Now there is plenty of greenry, lots of vegetable and fruits are grown, dairy-farming and poultry raised. This has also changed the food habits of people, raised family incomes and improved harsh climate. Due to greenry there is more rain and snowfall and this has made overall impact on climate of Ladakh. NGO culture in Ladakh has been owned willingly by Ladakhis is who have developed it good and fast. This has become a powerful vehicles of peoples participation and co-operation in this transformation. Another factor was in owning and adapting new technologies and techniques best suited to the conditions obtaining in this mountainous region. Use of solar energy and greenhouse cultivation has been adopted with great advantage. The traditional yak dung is not available in sufficient quantities, coal and kerosene oil after long haul from plains works out costly and contributes to pollution, LPG is being used as the main fuel. For this purpose a bottling plant has been established in Ladakh, perhaps the highest in the world.

While Ladakh attracts mountaineers from all over the world, it also has the distinction of having the highest battlefield in the world, on Siachen glacier, the second largest in the world, where Indian and Pakistani forces have been engaged in attacks on each other since 1984. Ladakh now has the world's largest remotely operated infra-red Telescope, at Hanle, at a height of over 16,000 ft.

At dawn of Independence, Buddhist monasteries and the monks (lamas) were the centre of life in every village. Every family used to give one male child to its gompa to be trained as a Lama. Every gompa was maintained by its administration under the head Lama if a gompa did not have an incarnate

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lama (Kushak) to head it. Till Ladakh was opened to tourist traffic in 1974, maintenance of gompas and induction of new monks had beome a problem but interest shown in gompas by tourists especially foreigners introduced new fervour and funds into gompass which were thereafter repaired, maintained and administered in better way. In the forties polyandry prevailed in Ladakh where more than one brother were deemed married to wife of any brother who got married. This kept population under control and avoided fragmentation of land holdings which were already small and insufficient because of scarce arable land. Though by law polyandry was abolished by Maharaja's government it continued to be practiced in some villages for many years even after independence.

Mention has been made earlier of local population having hardly any participation in administration of Ladakh when the country became independent. Pakistani aggression, awakening of people to their responsibility to defend the motherland, arrival of Indian troops, starting of air service, completion of road link with the rest of the country, opening of the region to tourism, establishing a Radio Station and later reception of television programmes, rapidly changed concepts of people. Desire for direct participation in administration and in decision making, led to legislators and ministers from Ladakkh being inducted at State level. Desire for greaster democratic rights showed up first in peaceful struggle but sometime erupted into full-fledged agitations. Ladakhis, first achieved Autonomous Development Hill Council for Leh District with limited powers. They continued to agitate and demand Union Territory stauts for the area. Though earlier governments did not concede the demand, the Mufti Government has agreed to give the LAHDC full powers under law setting up the Council. The Government has also elevated the Ministers from Ladakh region in the council of Ministers, to full cabinet rank and accorded this rank to the Chief Executive Councillor of LAHDC. A similar AHDC for Kargil District has been agreed to by the State Government and is likely to be set up soon.

Though it will not be fair to give credit to any individual for the revolutionary transformation of Ladakh but the leadership role played over five decades by Venerable Kushak Bakula Rimpoche, cannot be denied. Scores of Ladakhis have contributed to this remarkable transformation but some have done more than others and they include:

> Sonam Narboo; Rinchen Namgyl Kalon; Sonal Wangyl; Rani Parvati Devi, Kushak Togdan Rimpoche; Sonam Wangyl (Everester); Engineer Norphel (creator of artificial glaciers); Colonel Chhewang Rinchan, brave soldier who won MVC twice in his life; Akbar Ladakhi; Lama Lobzong; S. Gergen; P. Namgyal; Tsering Samphel; Chhewang Thupstan and C. Phunsog;

Ladakh has shown the way and in many other areas this needs to be replaced.

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SACRED SPRINGS OF JAMMU SHIVALIKS

by

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PROLOGUE

The fresh water springs of Jammu Shivaliks are unique examples where ecological and environment considerations have led to sanctifying of the perennial water sources since ancient times.

Ingrained into the life rhythm of hill and highland communities of outer Himalayan ranges of Jammu region. These sacred springs have evolved as cultural institutions that not only showcase social, religious practices but also are windows to native art and architecture.

But in recent years, the onset of modern way of life has led to neglect of these natural water sources. Due to ready availability of tube well water through pipelines in the rural homes, many of springs have either fallen in disuse or being allowed to fill up. This has endangered traditional institutions of natural water harvesting in Jammu region.

JAMMU SHIVALIKS – INTRODUCTION

Mentioned in the Puranas as Darva-Abhisar, Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir State is situated in Shivaliks ranges. The home of races, which are collectively called as Dogras, it is also known as Duggar Desh.

Comprising of the area between two ancient Himalayan rivers, Ravi and Chenab and until Pir Panjal ranges, Jammu region consists of three topographic divisions; plains, submontane – 'kandi' and mountainous – 'the pahar'. Marking the boundary from the right bank of river Ravi in south-east and Poonch in north, the divisions of the region into lower, middle and upper Shivaliks also refer to relative height of gradually rising hills and mountains.

Bordering the plains of Punjab on southwest from Gurdaspur to Sialkot – the ancient 'Sakala' of Madra Desha – and further till Chamb and Jourian. This more than 180 kilometers stretch is a narrow strip plains with width ranging from five to twenty kilometers (now excluding the territory that has become part of Pakistan since 1947) give way to lower most Himalayan ranges – the Shivalik outcrops-popularly called as 'Kandi' belt. Fullof thorny bushes, boulders, marked by narrow gorges and small valleys created by seasonal nullahas, this area of Duggar is most inhospitable terrain and is locally called as 'maru kandi' – the deadly Kandi. Arid and dry there is

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great shortage of water in this area. Only few decade ago natives use to tread long distances to fetch water from 'chos' ponds, very deep well and few springs.

The 'kandi' gives way to mid and upper Shivaliks ranges. Which rise, as rows of hills and form ribbon like valleys in between. One of most important and narrow valley is called Dansal Dun. Some 150 kilometers long and having width between five to ten kilometers, the 'Dun' begins from right bank of Ravi and Basohli and reaches upto Udhampur and than via Panchari-Landhar touches river Chenab.

Apart from Dansal Dun, all other areas of middle Shivaliks like Reasi,Gool Gulabgarh, entire districts of Poonch, Udhampur and Doda districts, are dotted with perennial sources of water springs and underground water veins that hug the lie and slopes of hills. In fact, such fresh water springs are found in the entire outer Himalayan ranges including areas of Hiamchal Pradesh, Garhwal and Kumaon right upto North-East.

BAOLIES-TYPES, SIZES, SHAPES AND LAYOUT

In Jammu region a natural spring is known by a general term of 'Baoli' on 'Baan'. While water gushingon oozing fromtheside of hill walls and harnessed by a wooden, bamboo or stone spout is called as "Suta' or 'Nadu'. In parts of Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir a water spring is called as 'Nag' like Verinag, Anantnag and Bhagsuang. While in Kumaon these are referred as 'Naulas'.

Baolies in Jammu Shivaliks fall in two categories. The small and most commonly found variety is simply called as a 'Baoli' or 'Baan'. Its size varies from two feet to ten feet square reservoir with varying depth. A large spring with a considerable discharge is called as 'Naun'. Such springs, which are not frequently, encountered are large in size and measure between ten to fifteen feet square and sometimes even more. Though some covered Baolies are said to have been constructed in remote areas, but in the extant examples, a Baoli as a matter of rule is an open-air structure. The point where underground water gushes out, is converted into a reservoir or basin, built by stones bricks. Wide at the top and narrowing like a cone towards the base, these reservoirs look like inverted hallowed pyramids. Other than the most commonly found square variety, the springs are also seen in hexagonal and octagonal shapes (Devak and Jib).

The general layout of springs is guided by the flow of the water, particular location, and its aspect in topography. In rare examples where the springs are seen in a plain area like Kathua, the number ofBaolies is not more than or two. But in the areas where the water table or water vein is very near the surface, large number of springs and 'sutas' are founding close vicinity only. There are many instances when more than 100 Baolies and 'Sutas' marked a particular area only half a century age. But due to deforestation or Eucalyptus plantation, which dries up the underground water due to excessive evaporation, many of the springs have dried up. But still it is common to find group of two to five Baolies at one place only (Thayal, Kouri).

Examples of indigenous water management sources, the water discharge of springs is allowed to be collected in many basins, big and small. While the main source is exclusively reserved for drinking water, the rest of the basins are

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used for bathing, washing of clothes and quenching the first of cattle and then the same water is channeled for irrigation purposes and in some cases also to run the water mills. At the village of Jib, which is situated some 10 kilometers, north of Garhi, Udhampur, the water gushing out from the entire length of the hill by the side of the seasonal 'nallah' at number of points has been harnessed through artistically decorated stone spouts. Similarly at Mele-da-Bag, near village Salmehri, Udhampur, again the entire slope by the side of the mango grove is full of springs. Such abundance of springs in one area automatically bestows a religious significance to the site where locals not only erect 'dehris' – memorials for ancestors, but also gather in large number on special days.

LOCATION AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE.

Located amidst shady trees, Baolies are everywhere – in and around villages, on waysides, on foot routes. Mostly being the only drinking water source for the local communities and the cattle, a spring located in the middle or near a village, is invariably the heart of the community. Males and females, old and young-gather to bathe, wash, offer worship to the gods, ancestors, heroes, sculpted on its walls, stop for a halt, exchange news and views, welcome outsiders and visitors, or simply be there and enjoy the cool environs, the murmur of quite flow or gurgle of gushing water and water falling from a spout. Attracting once in a day, almost every living and able bodies soul of the village-be it human, animal or bird – a Baoli often acts as a village 'Chopal' or the municipal place for the hill and highland communities of Jammu Shivaliks.

BAOLI AS AN OPEN AIR SHRINE

Being the perennial sources of life, the springs have acquired a semi-religious character during the course of time. Whenever a new spring was encased with masonry, it was consecrated by a religious ceremony where holy waters of five rivers like Ganga, Yamuna were poured into it. Its enclosing three walls decorated with 'sculptural reliefs' of goods and goddesses and often a small Shiva temple standing in one of its one side elevate these springs from a plain source of water to a sacred place. Supporting a canopy onfour pillars, these Shivalayas which are locally called as 'Chowkhandis' along with images of divine images on walls elevate Baolies of Shivaliks as open-air shrines. Here natives after morning ablutions also offer worship to respective gods and return home after completing morning's routine of a devout.

Many a times a spring is also the place to perform religious ceremonies as well as eschatological (after death) rituals. At the Baolies in the premises of ancient group of temples at Devak, Purmandal, Jandrah, or Airma, natives from near as well as far off villages come to these places to perform last rites of their relatives.

In case an icon of a local devta is installed by the side of a spring, then the site becomes a place of 'meil' – annual community gathering, of all those who worship that particular 'deveta'. Kouri group of springs, near Bilaspur on way to Thayal is one such example. The installation of the image of Kouri Devta, local 'Naga' deity has made the group of springs as a place for annual fair.

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When the springs are located in the premises of a pilgrimage center like Devak, Jandrah, they acquire a special significance places as inseparable adjuncts to the holy place. Every pilgrim begins his or her visit by taking the ritual bath in the spring situated in the premises.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Existing alongside organized religious organizations like the one centered around a Hindu temple and as testified from the magnificent monuments of early mediaeval temples like Kiramchi, Babor and Billawar in Jammu region, Baolies are very important historical and art historical institutions, The images sculpted on the Baoli reliefs, not only reflect on the development of religious beliefs that held sway in Jammu Shivaliks from time to time but also the development of different architectural styles as seen in the niches and pillars which enclose the main images. There also reference to contemporary fashions in dress, ornaments, weapons and other ethnographical details.

What is interesting that since these springs have been periodically renovated in past, it is common to find sculptures from different periods showing the evolutions of religious beliefs as seen in different iconographic schemes, and stylistic treatments one particular Baoli only. As it is still a practise not to throw away a broken on 'khandit' sculpture but to leave it near a source of water. With the result in one Baoli it is common to see a 10th century relief sharing the same wall with a sculpture that has been created only a hundred years ago. Also one can see pieces of pillars, and other architectural, members either lying nearby a spring or embedded in its renovated walls.

Baolies of Jammu region, therefore hold a special significance, especially when the history and culture of the region still has some unexplained areas for want of historical, religious, and artistic material evidences.

CHRONOLOGY OF SPRINGS.

The earliest spring that has been reported is the one, which has been excavated by Archaeological Survey of India, near Nand Babor temple, one of the protected early medieval temples at Manwal, on Dhar-Udhampur Road. Being located adjacent to the 'garbha graha', the spring may have been part of many such water bodies which were used for the purposes of ablutions by the devotees coming to temple. Based on the stylistic similarities of the reliefs sculptures of 'Sheshshayi Vishnu' and 'Ganesh' found carved on the enclosing walls of the spring with the sculptural decorations of the main temple, the spring is datable to the 10th century.

There are innumerable springs in Jammu region that show tell tale signs of periodic renovation and one finds many ancients reliefs on their walls. It is easy to trace a continuous tradition of Baoli art right from 10th centuries onward till the beginning of 20th century when this ancient tradition of Baolies art and architecture was discontinued. Though the existing springs still attract number of natives but their number is decreasing day by day.

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POST-SCRIPT

In this age of homogenization and globalization when customs and rituals, oral and performing traditions, arts and crafts all over the countrv are under pressure, the folk practices of Duggar are facing similar threat of slow erosion. The so-called wave of progress has brought unprecedented change in life style of rural and highland. Coupled with erosion in the environment and resource base, the life style as manifested in age-old customs, rituals along with concomitant elements of knowledge and skills are being lost forever.

Before many of native cultural and artistic institutions like the Sacred Springs of Duggar, become a part of history it is time to take appropriate scientific measures to preserve this heritage at the doorstep.

The springs of Jammu Shivaliks need to be salvaged and revitalized through in-situ conservation. This will include undertaking of conservation at actual sites, through earmarked projects that are participatory of nature. Where community and local groups are made aware of heritage as symbol of native pride and motivated to work for its preservation as well as revitalization to ensure the continuity of the same for community's own well being.

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DEMOCRACY AND POLITICS OF KASHMIR

by

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With reference to the 2002 Assembly elections, this Artucke aims at emphasizing the significance of the structures of democracy in Jammu and Kashmir. The importance of this election cannot be underestimated for the reason that it provides a very important opportunity to the Indian state to politically respond to the people of Kashmir who have been alienated since last twelve years. Now after a relatively fair election and a degree of voluntary political participation, there has evolved a positive political environment in the Valley. This environment is the result of the generally prevalent perception that the existing political arrangement has not been imposed from above and that it has an element of popular choice. It is the need to reinforce this environment that is being emphasized in this paper. The focus, therefore, is placed on the democratic politics. It is argued that the militancy manifested in Kashmir, largely, as a result of the failure of the democratic structures. And it is in democracy only that one can find the best antidote for it. Militancy in any concrete situation does not operate as an isolated and autonomous reality and its implications cannot be overstretched to draw any conclusions about the failure of political machinery. In Kashmir, the breakdown of political order preceded militancy and was a consequence of gradually eroding democratic processes. Though the whole political edifice appeared to have crumbled in a short span of two years from 1987 and 1989, yet the process which had caused it had started earlier as early as the inception of democratic structure in the State.

Militancy As A Crisis Of Democracy

Viewed from this angle, militancy can be perceived as a manifestation of a deep-rooted crisis of democracy. To a large extent, it is a crisis similar to the one confronting the Indian polity as a while through, it has added dimensions emanating from the unique situation in which Kashmir has been placed and the specific aspects related to its socio-economic structures.

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Indian polity which has earned the reputation of being a resilient democracy, has lately come to face a number of strains. There exist the problems of governance, ineffective political order, eroding legitimacy of authority of the state and consequent centralizing tendencies. The pluralist character of politics is facing threats from obscurantist and fundamentalist forces and violence is permeating all aspects of life. It is such a situation that has led the political analysts to term India as a violent democracy. Atul Kohli has identified a number of developments which have led to the crisis of democracy. (Kohli. 1988). These developments include, decline of significance of political parties, emphasis on personal rule, the politicisation of civil servants, ineffectivity of police in maintaining order, erosion of the state institutions and politicisation of social forces. The trouble of India's democracy in Kohli's view manifold as the precarious balance between strains and resilience was upset.

In the process of general decline of democratic structures, the problems in Kashmir do not seem to be isolated. The basic malaise affecting the body politic of India is reflected in this state as well. However, the dimensions of the crisis here have been certainly much more than in any other part of the country. The complete erosion of political processes has been a logical conclusion of a degenerating pattern of politics in Kashmir. Such a degeneration of democratic has been consistent and pervasive – so consistent and so pervasive that democracy could never take roots in Kashmir. More specifically, there has been a debilitated situation of mediated politics. It is a situation where political structures and political processes become so feeble that a proper linkage between civil society and polity becomes difficult. The mechanisms of conflict resolution lose their efficacy and the legitimate channels of articulation become generally unavailable.

Failure Of Mediated Politics – A Crisis of Ideology

The failure of mediated politics has been a twofold phenomenon in Kashmir – the ideological failure and the institutional future, the first causing the crisis of legitimacy and the other causing the crisis of governance. To understand this crisis, especially the one emanating from the ideological failure, it is important to refer to the political aspirations in Kashmir, in historical terms. The reason as to why alienation has been so deep-rooted here can be seen in the disjuncture between elite politics and the popular expectations as these were raised by the ideology of the political movement as it had evolved in Kashmir during the decades of 1930s and 1940s.

Kashmir's political consciousness, to begin with had imbibed strong ideological content. It was a political consciousness articulated during 1930s and 40s that reflected the interests of peasantry, artisans, workers and other marginal classes. Evolving itself under the organizational leadership of the National Conference, it took the shape of New Kashmir Movement. The New Kashmir Manifesto, the blueprint

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of the National Conference, incorporated concrete proposals for changing the oppressive economic structure and for establishing an egalitarian society. It laid down equitable distribution of land and elimination of parasites, middlemen and others as its basic objectives. It assured to peasants the right to work on land and to workers a minimum standard of living and minimum wages. Abolition of child labour, workers' share in the profit of a factory, workers' right of participation in the management of industries, free and compulsory universal primary education, the public health, system of social insurance, complete equality of women with men and their equal rights in political, economic and social field – were some of the prominent features of the New Kashmir Manifesto.

The politics as it emerged out of the political movement of thirties and forties was socially meaningful. It had the effect of extending ideology beyond the level rhetoric. It was the effect of such an ideological basis of politics that most progressive land reforms were undertaken in the state. All the Jagirs, Muafis, and Mukararies were abolished by a legislation of the NC led government in April 1948. As a result of this legislation, 396 Jagirdars and 2,347 Mukararies were dispossessed. The State Tenancy Act was amended the same year. But what changed the whole agrarian scenario in the state was the Big Landed Estate Abolition Act of 1950. This act expropriated all land exceeding 221/2 acres. "As a result of this enactment, 9,000 and odd proprietors were expropriated from 4.5 lakh acres of land and out of these 2.3 acres were transferred in ownership right to the tillers free of all encumbrances and the remaining land vested in the state".

The ideological tradition of politics could not be sustained for long time in Kashmir. By the early fifties, the logic of power became dominant and substituted the logic of social change. Acquiring altogether a new character, the politics lost its social relevance. Rather than responding to the spirations and demands of the masses, it started contributing to the rise and consolidation of a new Kashmiri elite. Instead of ideology, populism came to gain ground. As Puri points out, the popular political support to government in mid fifties and sixties was sought on the basis of politics of concessions and subsidies. Rice the staple food of people in the Valley, was subsidized to the tune 75% of its cost and liberal state loans were offered in agrarian and industrial sectors. Free educations at all levels, scholarships and loans for professional education, a low rate of taxation, etc. were some of the other measures at gaining the popular support. (Puri, 1968, 224-225). Huge central aid was pumped in the state but it was not directed towards the building of the economic infrastructure. No serious effort was made to plan and promote new industry, to modernize agriculture to remove unemployment or to strengthen the economy of the state. To Quote Puri again, "the role of the state in financing, regularizing and licensing economic activity as part of the planned development of the country was in the case of Kashmir guided by political interest of the Chief Minister and his supporters rather than by a defined economic policy".

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Such a politics brought new contradictions to surface. It was ostensibly pursued in the name of masses but it actually served the particular sections of the society including the politicians, the administrators, contractors, the professionals, exporters, the orchard owners etc .Liberal central aid thus created small pockets of affluence, while keeping the large majorities untouched and unaffected by economic gains.

Meanwhile, a psyche of dependence of the policies of concessions and subsidies started shaping itself in Kashmir. The central grants were taken for granted and the performance of a government came to be judged on the basis of amount and proportion of money it could get from the center. Consolidating the economy or responding to the common problems remained the least important priority before the government. Land reforms also remained the unfinished agenda.

Institutional Failure In Kashmir

The ideological failure in Kashmir was matched by the institutional failure. Such a failure had long term implications for the over-politicised and mobilised community of Kashmiris. As a result of political movement of thirties and forties, Kashmir had attained a level of political consciousness, which required to be positively channeled towards legitimized political processes. The political structure of representation, mediation and decision-making needed to respond to the heightened expectations of large numbers of people. But these structures, fragile at best in the beginning, gradually developed a number of distortions.

One of the key institutions of mediation in Kashmir was the National Conference. It had its strength in its mass base during the New Kashmir Movement. Its pro-people origin and its radical orientation had made it a force to reckon with. The combination of charisma, commitment, and conviction had defined the nature of its leadership structure. Hence this was the institution which could have become the rallying point for building the strength of democratic institutions. But the NC started losing its vitality as soon as it came into power. To begin with, it continued with its radical nature of politics but it soon lost its social concern and its politics started reflecting the immediate power considerations. As early as the early fifties, the party was faced with widespread allegations of political manipulations.

The greatest blow to the NC as a vital structure of power came in 1953 with arrest of Sheikh Abdullah. The superimposition of Bakshi Ghulam Mohd. As the leader of the party had the effect of changing the very character of NC. The organisational and the support structure of the party suffered a severe loss during his leadership. Not only the linkage of the party with common masses suffered a severe blow but the cadre of the party was also affected. The democratic character of the party was meanwhile eroded as personalized rule and the centralised structure of power marked the political

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situation of the time. Corrupt political practices. Nepotism and favouritism became widely prevalent among the key holders of government. All this seriously undermined the legitimacy of the NC.

The most serious reflection of the changed context of the party was manifested in its internal politics. In the absence of its charismatic leader, Abdullah, the party became vulnerable to increasing interference in its internal politics, specifically by the Congress. Such an interference culminated in the merger of the NC with the Congress. Such a development had the impact of negating the very logic of the existence of the NC. Not only its regional character was undermined but its very political essence was challenged. It could not restore its autonomy even when the party was resurrected in 1875. Congress continued to interfere in its politics in one way or the other.

Absence Of Interactive Politics And Lack of Oppositional Politics

The institutional failure of the party structure extended beyond the decline of dominant regional party. It actually involved the failure of all institutional structures of political opposition and dissent. A tradition of dialogical nature of politics could not evolve in Kashmir. Politics from the very beginning came to be so manipulated that healthy opposition could not survive on a healthy basis. Initially it was the manoeuvrability of the NC and the later the intervention of Congress which kept democratic opposition at bay. The NC used all sorts of methods to stifle opposition to achieve massive victories in elections. It abused its unchecked power to get the nomination papers of candidates belonging to the opposition parties rejected on flimsy grounds. It indulged in practices which had effect of intimidating the leaders of parties to opposition and it indulged in rigging at mass scale.

In subduing the role of the democratic opposition of the state, the Congress had a role to play. It could never reconcile to its role as a secondary actor. Hence it manipulated the state politics to serve its power interests in the state. Being the ruling party it virtually controlled the strings of Bakshi-led NC by using its power of patronage and financial assistance. By manoeuvring merger of NC, it later exercised uncontested power in the state for about a decade. When the NC was revived in 1975, it could nurse its ambition of indirect power through various means. Thus it engineered defections in the NC in 1984 and managed to seek backdoor entry by overthrowing the legitimately elected government and supporting the government of defectors. In 1986, it forced an alliance of NC which proved catastrophic for politics of the state in General and suicidal for NC in particularly. Even NC could not hold on to healthy democratic principles. In order to keep itself in power it resorted to all sorts of compromises with Congress. Such political moves of both the parties deformed the whole pattern of state politics.

The state politics had sufficient space for both parties. But instead of joining interactive politics, both chose to remain on the side of power. By acting as one political unit, the two; hegemonised the

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political space and closed all legitimate channels of opposition and dissent. In the absence of an organized oppositional politics, the democratic functioning of government was seriously undermined. With no check on is power, the government failed on principles of transparency and accountability.

It was during the first two decades of independence that major institutions of democratic governance were severely damaged in the state. "The lack of integration of the state with the center allowed for ways and means to government to interfere in the function of local institutions and using them in the personalized way. Not only the electoral machinery was used to further the political interest of the ruling party but the bureaucracy. The police and other institutions were abused by those in power." The special position of state was exploited to thwart any attempt to question the arbitrariness of holders of power, with autonomous union institutions having limited jurisdiction in state, the executive power could be easily abused. Any challenge to power holders could be checked through straight use of local preventive detention law and suppression of civil liberties in the name of National interest and unity and integrity of the state.

Crisis of Democracy And Alienation

While analyzing the crisis of democracy in India, Rajni Kothari points out four different but related forms of erosions erosion of the party system, erosion of legitimacy of political elite, erosion of moderation in the exercise of political power and, erosion of conception of state as instrument of social purpose. Our analysis of the politics of the state reveals the erosion of all the four kinds. The party system got eroded as the inter party competition and intra party democracy failed to define the politics of Kashmir. The legitimacy of the political elite declined as it came to be governed by power compulsions. A moderation in the exercise of power became difficult as arbitrariness, intimidation, malpractices became the order of the day. The social purposiveness of the politics was lost as the ideology of radical change failed to sustain itself. In such an eroded order, Kashmir could easily become a pretty to negative attitudes and anti emotions.

The alienation in Kashmir, to begin with, was a result of the discontent arising out of an objective situation of backwardness, unemployment, poverty, underdevelopment, and disparities of affecting the masses. Such an objective situation got mingled with the subjective response as anti-India rhetoric became the logic of politics. To obscure the distorted nature of politics and to camouflage the intra-societal contradictions arising out of deficient nature of economic development, such a subjective response was gradually articulated by the elite itself. The tragic position of Kashmir as well as Pakistan's interest, intervention and propaganda further helped reinforce such a response. With the political institutions having no efficacy, and the governmental structures kindling no hope in the minds of

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people, the scope of such a response was broadened and the separatist politics was gradually internalized in the state.

The separatist politics from the very beginning competed for a space as well as legitimacy. For a long time, this politics through maintaining effective visibility, continued to operate at the periphery. But as the mainstream politics failed to provide healthy and positive channels for the expression of discontent, the separatist politics extended its space. By the end of eighties, as the credibility of democratic institutions reached its lowest point, this politics gained momentum and came to surface in the form militancy on the one hand and the political upsurge on the other. This was the final manifestation of the democratic politics in general and the failure of institutional and ideological structure on the other.

Towards Democratisation

In the context of alienation, the recently conducted Assembly election offers some respite. This election has attained a relatively higher degree of legitimacy – not merely in the eyes of the international community but in the eyes of the common Kashmiris as well. For the first time in last five decades, a change of political regime has been possible through democratic means. Though the level of participation in the elections has been quite uneven – with some areas registering a high voter turnout and other areas totally boycotting the elections, the quality of participation has certainly been a cut above many other elections that were held in last few years.

The 2002 elections have helped create some democratic space in the politics of Kashmir. This has been possible not merely due to the fairness of elections and some extent of voluntarism but also due to the nature of political competition. There has been a reflection of genuine democratic competition for the first time in mainstream politics. One of the reasons for alienation in Kashmir, as we have seen above, has been an absence of an interactive politics. Due to the hegemony of the ruling party there has almost been no role for the opposition. This hegemonic role of the ruling party has been having dangerous implications for the democratic politics of the Valley. One of the crucial developments, in the recent elections, however, has been a break in the hegemonic role of the ruling party. The competitive spirit that has been generated due to the active competition between the National Conference and the People's Democratic Party has had the effect of reinvigorating the political environment of Kashmir.

The positive political environment that has been generated by the 2002 Assembly elections needs to be sustained. There is sufficient space for democratic politics to assert itself and to help address the alienation of the common Kashmiris.

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डोगरा धरती के गौरवः

संगीताचार्य श्री जियालाल 'बसन्त'

24 मई 1913 ई० से 21 दिस० 1985 ई०

डोगरा धरती को गौरव प्रदान करने वाले उन सपूतों की संख्या हाथ की उंगलियों पर गिनी जा सकती है,जिन्होंने समाज-सेवा के क्षेत्र अथवा कला-साहित्य-संस्कृति के क्षेत्र में चिर-स्मरणीय योगदान दिया है। ऐसे चिर-स्मरणीय लोगों में जिन चंद बलिदानी व्यक्तियों को डोगरा जाति की पीढ़ियां, **लोक - नायक** मान कर पूजती आईं हैं, वे हैं (1) अमर किसान - (शहीद) **बावा जित्तो**, (2) सरपंच - शिरोमणी, **दाता रणपत** और (3) पंजाब के एकमात्र सिक्ख **महाराजा रंजीत सिंह** के आधिपत्य से डोगरा धरती को मुक्त करवाने के लिए 12 बरस तक गुरील्ला जंग करके, वैष्णों देवी के त्रिकूट पर्वत के सांझी छत्त नाम के स्थान पर आत्म - बलिदान देने वाले शेरे - डुग्गर, मियां डीडो जमवाल।* इन पूजनीय लोक-नायकों के बाद जिस बलिदानी सूरमे का स्मरण आते ही, जन-इतिहास के जिज्ञासु डोगरों के सिर गर्व से श्रद्धावनत हो जाते हैं, वह था शहीद, **कप्तान गंधर्व सिंह मन्हास,** जिसने जम्मू - प्रांत की दक्षिणी सीमा-रेखा पर बसे भिम्बर नगर के निवासियों को, सशस्त्र पाकिस्तानी 'रेडर्स' के घेरे से मुक्ति दिलाने के प्रयास में आत्म-बलिदान दिया था। यह बलिदान 25 अक्तूबर , 1947 ई० के दिन हुआ था।

डुग्गर को गौरवान्वित करने वाले समाज-सेवियों में **सरदार बुधसिंह, लाला हंसराज, लाला ईश्वरदास मींगी, मास्टर श्री रामनाथ प्रभाकर**, उधमपुर के **पं० दयाराम शास्त्री** और रियासत में पत्रकारिता के पितामह, **लाला मुल्कराज सराफ** आदि आदि।

स्व. **श्री. मुल्कराज 'सराफ'** जी के इस स्मारक ग्रंथ के लिए मैं, जम्मू के एक और भूले - बिसरे, कला-साधक को याद करके उसकी स्मृति में, अपनी श्रद्धा के भाव-सुमन भेंट करना चाहता हूं। इस विशिष्ट कला-साधक का नाम था **श्री जिया लाल 'वसन्त'**।

मुझे अपनी एक 'फाईल' में स्व० श्री गणेशदास शर्माकी, अंग्रेजी में लिखी एक चिट्ठी मिली।

by

Ram Nath Shastri, Dogri writer, poet, critic, leading light of Dogri Sansthha, also edited, translated about 50 publications; awarded Padma Shri 1990.

*पढ़िये "डुग्गर के लोक-नायक" नामक डोगरी पुस्तक। लेखक प्रो० रामनाथ शास्त्री, प्रकाशक : डोगरी संस्था, जम्मू

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यह चिट्ठी उन्होंने सन् 1997 ई० में लिखी थी। इसमें उन्होंने लिखा था : "Jiya lal Vasant, who appeared on the music horizon as a bright star & did Duggar Proud, hailed from Akhnoor. He was essentially a self-made man."

स्व. गणेशदास शर्मा, रियासत के सूचना-विभाग में Secretary Information के ऊंचे पद पर काम करके रिटायर हुए थे। वे भी अखनूर के ही रहने वाले थे। स्कूली पढ़ाई में श्री जियालाल 'वसन्त' उनसे एक क्लास आगे थे। दोनों गहरे दोस्त थे। मैं श्री गणेश दास के साथ, एक बार 1997 ई० में अखनूर गया था। अखनूर में गणेशशाह जी ने, जिया लाल वसन्त के परिवार के **दो मकान** मुझे दिखाए। एक मकान के आंगन से, सीढ़ियाँ चढ़ कर, उन्होंने मुझे वह कमरा भी दिखाया, जहाँ वे दोनों पढ़ा करते थे। अब वे दोनों मकान बिक चुके हैं।

मेरा विश्वास है कि **क़ुदरत** जिन व्यक्तियों से उनके जीवन में कुछ विशेष काम लेना चाहती है, उनकी निगहबानी वह उनके बचपन से ही शुरू कर देती है। श्री जिया लाल 'वसन्त' भी उसी श्रेणी के एक विशिष्ट व्यक्ति थे।

श्री **'वसन्त'** का जन्म, पंजाब यूनिवर्सिटी से **मेट्रिक** पास करने के उनके सर्टिफिकेट के अनुसार 24 मई, 1923 ई० को अख़नूर में हुआ था। उनके पिता **लाला जगन्नाथ नागपाल**, रियासत के महकमा **माल** में गिर्दावर के पद पर काम कर रहे थे। ला० जगन्नाथ नागपाल को, अपनी नौकरी के सिलसिले में, जम्मू तथा श्रीनगर की अलग-अलग जगहों में जाना पड़ा था। वे गिर्दावर के पद पर काम करते हुए जहाँ-जहाँ भी रहे, उनका परिवार उनके साथ रहा। इसलिए जियालाल की आठवीं श्रेणी तक की पढ़ाई, अख़नूर से बाहिर के स्कूलों में ही हुई। ला० जगन्नाथ को संगीत में थोड़ी-बहुत रुचि ज़रूर रही थी। इसी लिए रियासत के जिस शहर या कस्बे में, अपनी नौकरी के सिलसिले में वे जाते, वहां गाने-बजाने वाले लोगों से उनका मेल-जोल हो जाता। हारमोनियम, तबला वगैरा साज़ नागपाल के अपने घर में भी थे। **जिया लाल 'वसन्त'** को संगीत के यह **संस्कार,** इन्हीं घरेलू महफ़िलों से प्राप्त हुआ था।

सन् 1930 ई० में **लाला जगन्नाथ नागपाल** तबदील होकर, ज़िला जम्मू की किसी तहसील में आ गए थे। उन दिनों उनका स्वास्थ्य ठीक नहीं था। ज़्यादा बीमार हो जाने के कारण वे छुट्टी लेकर अपने घर, अख़नूर में आ गए।

सन् 1930 ई० में **दीपों के त्योहार, दीवाली** के दीपकों से अखनूर कस्बे में सभी घरों में दीपों की कतारें जगमगा उठीं। लक्ष्मी का पूजन हुआ। मिठाई का लेन-देन हुआ लेकिन अख़नूर के एक घर में इस शुभ पर्व की खुशियों-भरी रात, कुहराम में डूबी रही। **लाला जगन्नाथ नागपाल** का दीवाली की उसी शाम को प्राणान्त हो गया। जिया लाल 'वसन्त' उस समय 16वें या 17वें बरस में थे। उन्होंने आंठवीं का इम्तहान पास कर लिया था। लाला जगन्नाथ जी के जीवन-काल में, जिस परिवार के लोग आराम का जीवन भोग रहे थे, उनका देहान्त होते ही वह खुशहाली स्वप्न हो गई। परिवार, बेसहारा हो गया। जियालाल चिन्ता में पड़ गए कि अपनी दो बहनों तथा माता का गुज़ारा अब कैसे होगा ? उनकी स्कूली पढ़ाई का क्या होगा ? उनकी बड़ी बहन की शादी ला० जगन्नाथ के जीवन-काल में हो चुकी थी।

जिया लाल ने निश्चय किया कि उसे अख़नूर में किसी दुकान पर बैठ कर कोई छोटा-मोटा धन्धा कर लेना चाहिए। आखिर उसने तस्वीरों को 'फ्रेम' लगाने और बेचने का काम शुरू किया। श्री गणेश दास शर्मा ने मुझे बताया कि जिया लाल ने शिवजी के एक कार्ड-साईज़ चित्र को फ्रेम लगाकर मुझे दिया था। मैंने उस चित्र को अपने गांधीनगर वाले मकान में बने छोटे से पूजागृह में रख लिया। वह चित्र अब भी मेरी पूजा में है। उन्हीं दिनों, अख़नूर का, आठवीं श्रेणी तक का वह पुराना मिडिल स्कूल, **महाराजा हरिसिंह जी** के आदेश से **हाई**

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स्कूल बना दिया गया। कुछ दोस्तों तथा रिश्तेदारों के बार-बार के तकाज़ों को मानकर, जियालाल ने भी, तस्वीरों का धंधा छोड़कर, स्कूल की नौवीं जमात में दाखिला ले लिया और टूटा हुआ पढ़ाई का सिलसिला दुबारा शुरू कर दिया।

मैं जियालाल के बारे में जानकारी प्राप्त करने दुबारा, या शायद तीसरी बार अख़नूर गया तो मुझे कुछ नई बातों की जानकारी मिली जैसे, सन् 1931 तथा सन् 1932 में, जब जियालाल नौवीं तथा दसवीं जमात का विद्यार्थी था, तभी उसके मन में संगीत तथा साहित्य (उर्दू शायरी करने) के **बीज** अंकुरित होने लगे। एक तरफ वे कस्बे (अख़नूर) की सांस्कृतिक गतिविधियों में रुचि लेने लगे तथा दूसरी ओर स्कूल की नौवीं श्रेणी में पढ़ाई का सिलसिला जारी करके उनके मन में शायरी करने की भी लगन पैदा हुई। स्कूल में, अंग्रेजी, गणित तथा 'जनरल-नालेज' ये तीन विषय तो सब विद्यार्थियों के लिए अनिवार्य होते थे। इनके अतिरिक्त दो विषय विद्यार्थी अपनी इच्छा से चुनता था। श्री वसन्त ने उर्दू तथा फ़ारसी का चयन किया। संयोग की बात थी कि उन्हें उर्दू पढ़ाने वाले अध्यापक स्वयं भी **उर्दू-शायरी** में दिलचस्पी रखते थे।

श्री 'वसन्त' में उर्दू शायरी करने का रुझान देख कर उर्दू के उस्ताद ने उनके इस शौक को विकसित करने में मदद की। 'वसन्त' जो भी गज़ल या नज़्म लिखता, उसके उस्ताद उसकी 'इस्लाह' करते। जो दो बरस, श्री वसन्त ने हाई स्कूल में गुज़ारे, उस अर्से में उसने अपनी शायरी के शौक को जीवित रखा। श्री वसन्त के इस शौक के बारे में हम इस लेख के अन्त में उनकी छपी हुई उनकी पुस्तकों की संक्षेप में चर्चा करेंगे। लेकिन यहाँ, उनके 'उपनाम' ('तख़ल्लुस') की ओर संकेत करना मैं ज़रूरी समझता हूँ। उनके पिता (श्री जगन्नाथ नागपाल) का देहान्त हुए लगभग एक बरस से भी कम समय हुआ था। वसन्त का परिवार अभी भी उसी शोक के साये में जी रहा था। शायद इसी बात को ध्यान में रखते हुए, अख़नूर के हाई स्कूल के उस उर्दू-अध्यापक ने जियालाल के लिए **"वसन्त"** उपनाम चुना, जो उस समय बड़ी ही समझदारी और दूर-अन्देशी की बात थी। **'वसन्त',** पतझड़ के 'अवसान' का सन्देश लाती है। 'संगीत' ओर 'शायरी', जीवन की वसन्त ऋतु के सदा-बहार फूल हैं। लगता है कि जियालाल के जीवन में भी **ऋतु-परिवर्तन** होने लगा था।

अख़नूर में उन्हीं दिनों, एक पशु-चिकित्सक, कहीं से तबदील होकर आए थे। नाम था - **डा० फ़िरोज़ दीन**। वह संगीत का शौक रखते थे। हारमोनियम बजाने में बड़े माहिर थे। अखनूर की रामलीला क्लब में, जिया लाल 'वसन्त' की, डा० फ़िरोजदीन से मुलाकात हो गई । डा० फिरोज़दीन ने उनको अपना 'सहायक' बना लिया। इन दोनों के कारण अखनूर की रामलीला क्लब की गतिविधियों में संगठनात्मक मज़बूती आती गई। अखनूर के ही एक **ठा० अजीतसिंह,** जिया लाल के एक सहपाठी, अनिरुद्धसिंह के बड़े भाई थे। उन्हें तबला बजाने का शौक था। श्री ठाकुर अजीतसिंह, दरया चिनाब के किनारे, जिया पोता नाम के घाट पर जाकर तबला बजाने का अभ्यास करते थे। जिया काल भी छुट्टी वाले दिन या कभी स्कूली पढ़ाई के बाद दरया पर अजीतसिंह जी के पास जा बैठता। अजीतसिंह 17-18 बरस के जिया लाल की यह रुचि देखकर प्रसन्न हुए और आहिस्ता-आहिस्ता उन दोनों में गुरु-शिष्य का सम्बन्ध विकसित हुआ। जिया लाल **ठा० साहब** से तबला बजाने की शिक्षा प्राप्त करने लगा। फ़ुर्सत मिलते ही वह दुकान खोल कर तस्वीरों को फ्रेम करने का अपना धंधा भी चलाने का यत्न करता।

सन् 1932 का पहला **चरण** बीतते ही, दसवीं श्रेणी के इम्तेहान का समय आ गया। जिया लाल 'वसन्त' और उसका सहपाठी अनिरुद्धसिंह दोनों अखनूर शहर से जम्मू में आ गए, क्योंकि परीक्षा का केन्द्र जम्मू में ही था। दोनों सहपाठी शहर की 'हरि-टाकी' में रात को सिनेमा 'शो' देखने का आनन्द भी लेते और साथ ही सवेरे परीक्षा भी देते। परिणाम निकला तो दोनों पास हो गए। अनिरुद्ध ने मुझे अख़नूर की एक बैठक में बतलाया था कि वह इम्तेहान में 432 नम्बर लेकर पास हुआ और जिया लाल को 431 नम्बर मिले थे।

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दसवीं की परीक्षा पास कर लेने के बाद जिया लाल 'वसन्त' की जीवन-यात्रा का यह **पहला पड़ाव** पूरा हुआ। अखनूर कस्बे के साथ जैसे जिया लाल का सम्बन्ध पूरी तरह खत्म हो गया। आगे पढ़ने के लिए उसने श्रीनगर के एस.पी. कालेज में, F.A. की क्लास में दाखिला ले लिया, जहां उसने उर्दू और फ़ारसी के साथ 'फ़िलासफ़ी' का एक नया मजमून भी अपनी पढ़ाई में शामिल कर लिया। चौथा मज़मून अंग्रेजी था जो सभी विद्यार्थियों के लिए अनिवार्य था। इसके अगले वर्ष, अखनूर का उसका साथी श्री गणेशदास शर्मा भी मेट्रिक की परीक्षा पास करके श्रीनगर के उसी कालेज में दाखिल हो गया। श्रीनगर में इन दोनों साथियों को अपने किन्हीं संबंधियों के साथ रहने की सुविधा मिल गई थी। जियालाल की रिहायश श्रीनगर में अमीरा कदल नाम के मुहल्ले में थी। इसी मुहल्ले में सड़क के किनारे पर **प्रताप-भवन** नाम की एक दोमंज़ला पक्की इमारत है। इस इमारत में नाटक खेलने तथा गाने बजाने के प्रोग्राम अक्सर होते रहते थे। जिया लाल भी अखनूर के कस्बे से इन दोनों कलाओं के संस्कार लेकर श्रीनगर के कालेज में दाखिल हुआ था। उसे श्रीनगर में इन प्रोग्रामों का चलन देख कर बड़ी प्रसन्नता हुई।

सन् 1933 ई० में जिया लाल का विवाह पश्चिमी पंजाब के वज़ीराबाद नाम के शहर में करवा दिया गया। परिणाम स्वरूप उसकी कालेज की पढ़ाई को समुचित ढंग से चलाने के लिए जितनी दिलचस्पी और समय की अपेक्षा थी, उसमें बाधा पड़ी। लेकिन संगीत में अपनी रुचि के कारण, जियालाल ने कई वाद्य-यंत्रों की मुहारत हासिल कर ली थी। इन वाद्य-यंत्रों में प्रमुख थे :- तबला, हारमोनियम, सितार और वायलिन।

संगीताचार्य श्री **भातखंडे** के लिखे, शास्त्रीय संगीत के प्रसिद्ध ग्रंथ मंगवा कर वह संगीत का अभ्यास करता रहा। ये ग्रंथ ही उसे शास्त्रीय संगीत सिखाने वाले, उसके पहले गुरु बने। आहिस्ता-आहिस्ता उसे अपनी एफ.ए. की पढ़ाई बीच में ही छोड़ देनी पड़ी। जीवन का कठिन-कठोर संघर्ष उसके सामने था, लेकिन उसके मन में, इसी संगीत के सहारे अपने जीवन के संघर्ष से जूझने का भरोसा पैदा हो रहा था।

यह उसके जीवन का **दूसरा पड़ाव** था। गर्मियों के छैः महीने, जब तक सरकारी दफ्तर श्रीनगर में रहते, जियालाल अमीरा कदल के आस-पास किराए का मकान ले कर अपने परिवार की रिहायश का जुगाड़ करते तथा वहां **आर्य-समाज** जैसी किसी संस्था के भवन में संगीत सिखाने का केन्द्र चलाते। गरीब बच्चों को श्री वसन्त निःशुल्क संगीत सिखाते थे लेकिन सम्पन्न तथा समर्थ शिष्यों से 6 - 7 रूपये मासिक शुल्क लेते। इसी तरह सर्दियों के छैः महीने जम्मू में आकर, मकान किराए पर लेकर परिवार की रिहायश का प्रबंध करते तथा **'सिराजों की ढक्की'** के सिरे पर श्री लक्ष्मी-नारायण के मंदिर के आस-पास किसी दुकान पर बना हुआ एक चौबारा किराए पर लेकर संगीत की सिखलाई का केन्द्र चालू कर लेते। महीने भर में नियमित रूप से संगीत सिखाने से होनेवाली लगभग 50-60 रूपए की आय से उनके परिवार की गुजर बसर भी हो जाती तथा मकान और संगीत-केन्द्र के किराए की देनदारी भी पूरी हो जाती। आश्चर्य की बात यह है कि जियालाल जैसे जैसे संगीत सिखलाने के काम में, भरोसे के शिक्षक बनकर उभरने लगे, वैसे वैसे उनके मन में गरीब लेकिन संगीत सीखने योग्य बच्चों की तलाश करने और उन्हें संगीत की निशुल्क शिक्षा देने की लालसा भी बलवती होती गई। श्रीनगर में तो उन्हें ऐसे होनहार निध न बच्चे मिलना कुछ दुर्लभ प्रतीत हुआ, लेकिन जम्मू में ऐसे कई बच्चे उनके संपर्क में आए। जम्मू के संगीत-केन्द्र में आकर, संगीत की प्रारंभिक शिक्षा प्राप्त करने वाले ऐसे चार बच्चों की मुझे भी जानकारी मिली जिन्हें, उन बच्चों के माता-पिता की अनुमति लेकर, श्री वसन्त अपने साथ श्रीनगर ले जाते। उन्हें अपने साथ रखते। उन्हें वहां सरकारी स्कूल में दाखिल करवा देते और शाम को अपने संगीत-केन्द्र में

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उन्हें संगीत की शिक्षा देते। अपने बच्चों की तरह उनको, खाने-पीने, पढ़ने-लिखने तथा सोने-बैठने की सुविधा प्रदान करते। मुझे श्री वसन्त के इन **शिष्यों** से मिलने की बड़ी उत्सुकता थी।

श्री वसन्त के ऐसे तीन शिष्यों से मेरा बड़ा निकट का संपर्क भी रहा है। इनमें एक थे इन्द्र गोयल, जिन्होंने श्री वसन्त से सितार-वादन की शिक्षा ली थी। बड़े होकर यही सितार-वादन उनकी जीवन-चर्या का साधन-सहारा बना। वे मुम्बई की फिल्मी दुनिया में चले गए और वहां किसी ऑर्कस्ट्रा-ग्रुप में सितार-वादक के रूप में काम करते रहे।

दूसरे शिशु-कलाकार थे श्री जगदीश शर्मा। जगदीश शर्मा ने बड़े होकर संगीत में एम.ए. पास किया और जम्मू में, लड़कियों के सरकारी कालेज में संगीत के प्राध्यापक नियुक्त हुए। उन्होंने नौकरी में रहते, संगीत के विषय में ही PH.D. की उपाधि भी प्राप्त की। अपने बेटों को भी उन्होंने संगीत की शिक्षा दी। कालेज की नौकरी से रिटायर होकर, उन्होंने लड़के-लड़कियों के लिए अपने घर पर एक संगीत-शिक्षा केन्द्र खोला और सफलता-पूर्वक उसका संचालन किया। अपने गुरु श्री जिया लाल 'वसन्त' जी की प्रौढ़ अवस्था का एक बड़ा चित्र, उनके कमरे में सदा मौजूद रहा है।

श्री वसन्त के इसी तरह के तीसरे शिष्य थे, श्री बोधराज शर्मा, जो बाल्यकाल में तबला बजाने का अभ्यास करते थे। बी.ए. की परीक्षा पास करके वे रेडियो - स्टेशन जम्मू में नौकर हो गए। तथा उन्नति की सीढ़ियाँ चढ़ते हुए, **स्टेशन-डॉयरेक्टर** के पद पर आसीन रह कर रेडियो स्टेशन की सेवा से निवृत्त हुए।

श्री वसन्त से, जम्मू-कश्मीर राज्य में जिन लोगों ने संगीत के किसी पहलू में शिक्षा प्राप्त की उनकी सूची खासी लम्बी है।

जियालाल के जीवन-संघर्ष के इस दूसरे पडाव में जम्मू तथा श्रीनगर में संगीत की सेवा करते हुए श्री वसन्त को 12 बरस हो गए थे। अब दोनों जगहों पर खाते पीते घरानों की लड़कियाँ भी श्री वसन्त से सितार, सरोद, वायलिन आदि वाद्य-यंत्र (साज़) सीखती थीं। श्रीनगर में रियासत के कुछ बड़े अधिकारी भी श्री वसन्त से संगीत की शिक्षा लेते रहे हैं। इनमें एक थे श्रीनगर प्रान्त के **गवर्नर** श्री महाराज कृष्ण और दूसरे थे श्रीनगर के प्रसिद्ध डाक्टर श्री गवाशलाल।

सन् 1947 ई० के अक्तूबर महीने के तीसरे सप्ताह में पाकिस्तानी हाकिमों ने 7 - 8 हज़ार सशस्त्र कबायलियों को, श्रीनगर पर अधिकार करने के लिए भेजा।

इसी वर्ष, 15 अगस्त तक भारतवर्ष की बाकी सभी रियासतों ने भारत या पाकिस्तान में विलय का फैसला कर लिया था।, लेकिन जम्मू-कश्मीर ही एक-मात्र ऐसी रियासत थी जो इस बात का फैसला अभी तक नहीं कर सकी थी। हमारी रियासत के लिए अक्तूबर 1947 ई० का यह महीना, इन्हीं घटनाओं और उनसे पैदा होनेवाली पेचीदगियों के कारण, ऐतिहासिक दृष्टि से अत्यन्त गंभीर समय था। इस गंभीर स्थिति के बारे में यहां विस्तार से चर्चा करने का समय नहीं है।

श्री जियालाल वसन्त सन् 1947 ई० के अक्तूबर महीने में श्रीनगर में ही थे। सरकारी कार्यालयों में काम करने वाले मुलाज़मों के सैकड़ों परिवार भी श्रीनगर में थे। व्यापारी लोग तथा सैलानी लोग भी काफी बड़ी संख्या में उस समय वहां थे। कबायली रेडर्स, लूट मार करते हुए श्रीनगर शहर को घेरने के लिए आगे बढ़ रहे थे।

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Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

आखिर 26 अक्तूबर की शाम को महा० हरिसिंह ने, जम्मू में पहुंचकर, विलय के डाकुमैंट पर हस्ताक्षर कर दिए और 27 अक्तूबर की सुबह, भारतीय सेना के जवानों को लेकर फौजी हवाई जहाज़ श्रीनगर के हवाई अड्डे पर उतरना शुरू हो गये।

श्रीनगर में उस समय, वहां से सुरक्षित निकलने के लिए व्याकुल कई हज़ार नागरिक, कबायलियों के विरुद्ध लड़ने और उन्हें अपनी धरती से खदेड़ने के लिए उत्सुक भारतीय सैनिकों के लिए परेशानी का कारण बनने लगे। इसलिए फैसला हुआ कि फौजी हवाई जहाज श्रीनगर हवाई अड्डे पर सैनिकों को उतार कर जब वापस जाने लगें तो श्रीनगर में फंसे परिवारों को निःशुल्क दिल्ली तक ले जाएं। जियालाल वसन्त भी अपने परिवार-जनों के साथ इसी तरह एक फौजी हवाई जहाज़ में दिल्ली आ गए।

इस तरह उनके जीवन संघर्ष का **तीसरा पड़ाव** दिल्ली में शुरू हुआ।

दिल्ली में किराए का मकान मिल जाने से उन्हें वहां कुछ राहत नसीब हुई और फिर शुरू हुआ जीवन का संघर्ष और अपने टूटे हुए सपने को दुबारा साकार करने का प्रयत्न। आहिस्ता-आहिस्ता दिल्ली के 'दरयागंज' मुहल्ले में, जहां वह सपरिवार रहते थे, वहीं एक कमरा किराए पर लेकर उन्होंने संगीत की शिक्षा देने का शुभारंभ किया। कविता लिखने का जुनून भी वे निभा रहे थे। एक गिर्दावर पिता का, लाड-प्यार में पला लड़का, सन् 1930 की दीवाली के दिन से लेकर 1950 ई० तक, एक ही जुनून, एक ही लग्न को सीने में संभाले हुए वक्त के तूफ़ानी उतार-चढ़ावों में से निकलता, कहाँ से कहाँ आ पहुँचा था ! दिल्ली में भी श्री वसन्त ने संगीत और कविता के दो दीपकों को जलाए रखा। दिल्ली में उसके दोस्तों, प्रसंशकों का एक घेरा भी बनता जा रहा था। दिल्ली में उन्हें, **आल इंडिया रेडियो में संगीत - निर्देशक** के तौर पर काम करने का मौका भी मिल गया।

1952 ई० के मध्य में उनका दूसरा कविता-संग्रह **'महफिल'** दिल्ली से ही प्रकाशित हुआ। उनकी पहली उर्दू कविता की किताब **'नयूया'** सन् 1946 ई० में लाहोर से छपी थी। छः बरस के बाद यह उनका दूसरा कविता-संग्रह दिल्ली से प्रकाशित हुआ। इस संग्रह में हिन्दी के 51 गीत पहले भाग में, मंझले भाग में पंजाबी भाषा में लिखे 26 गीत और आखिरी हिस्से में उर्दू ज़बान में लिखी 26 गज़लें शामिल हैं। तीनों जबानों की रचनाएँ अपनी अपनी मखसूस लिपियों में छापी गई हैं। और इन तीनों हिस्सों के दीवाचे (भूमिकाएं), उन ज़बानों के नामवर अदीबों ने लिखे हैं, जैसे 'उर्दू' में लिखी गज़लों का दीबाचा : उर्दू के उस समय के मशहूर शायर पंडित **हरिचन्द 'अख्तर'** ने, पंजाबी गीतों का दीवाचा, पंजाबी की नामवर शायरा सुश्री **अमृता प्रीतम** ने और हिन्दी गीतों की भूमिका श्री सत्यदेव शर्मा ने तथा आर्शीवाद के कुछ शब्द, हिन्दी के प्रसिद्ध कवि और नाटककार श्री **उदयशंकर भट्ट** ने लिखे हैं। जियालाल दिल्ली में लगभग सात बरस तक रहे, लेकिन लगता है कि दिल्ली उन्हें बांध नही सकी। उनकी रूह जिस सकून की तलाश में थी, वह उन्हें दिल्ली में नसीब नहीं हुआ। इसीलिए वह अपने स्थाई घौंसले के लिए किसी निकुंज की खोज में 1955-56 ई० में बम्बई में आ गए। बम्बई के बातावरण की टोह लेने के लिए वे पहले अकेले ही बम्बई आए। उनकी छोटी बेटी सुश्री **प्रेम वसन्त** ने एक पत्र में मुझे लिखा :

"He came to Bombay for a concert and decided to make Bombay his home. His main source of help there, was Dr. S.S.Nishat, his childhood friend and who was then TRADE AGENT of the J&K State there.

It took him almost two years, to rent a flat at Mahim, so that he could get his family there with him. He shifted to Yogeshwari first and then to BANDRA in 1960 A.D."

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जियालाल 'वसन्त' की इच्छा थी कि उन्हें मुम्बई के फिल्मीजगत में संगीत-निर्देशन का कोई मौका मिल जाए। लेकिन ऐसा कोई अवसर उन्हें वहां नहीं मिला।

मैं समझता हूं कि संगीत सिखाने की उनकी प्रतिबद्धता के लिए यह अच्छा ही हुआ। उन्होंने अनेकों बच्चों को संगीत सीखाने के क्षेत्र में वहां भी जो उपल्बिधयाँ प्राप्त कीं उनके सम्बन्ध में एक ही प्रसंग का, मैं यहां हवाला देना चाहता हूँ :-

21 अक्तूबर, सन् 1975 ई० के दिन, बांद्रा स्थित उनके **'वसन्त संगीत निकेतन'** का वार्षिक उत्सव था। उन्होंने इसमें महाराष्ट्र प्रदेश के चार विशिष्ट व्यक्ति आमंत्रित किए थे। वे थे - श्री एस.बी. चवान, सुश्री कुसुम ताई, वी.एस.पागे (Chairman Maharashtra Legislative Council) और Shree. Vishanji Lakhamsi ये चारों महानुभाव समारोह में शामिल होने पधारे। समारोह के मुख्य अतिथि, श्री महाराष्ट्र के तत्कालीन मुख्य मंत्री, श्री S.B.Chavan ने समारोह के अन्त में अपनी प्रतिक्रिया इन शब्दों में व्यक्त की थी :- "आज से पहले, इस संगीत-संस्थान के प्रिंसिपल साहब से मेरी मुलाकात कभी नहीं हुई। मैं आज भी इसी इरादे से यहाँ आया था कि 10-15 मिनट बैठकर वापिस चला जाऊंगा, लेकिन **बच्चों ने** यहां जिस प्रकार का प्रोग्राम पेश किया है, उसे देख कर और सुन कर मैं जाने की बात ही भूल गया। मुझे यह बात बहुत अच्छी लगी की निकेतन के ये नन्हें कलाकार सिर्फ अच्छा गाते ही नहीं, वाद्य-यंत्रों, तबला, सितार आदि के बजाने में भी वैसे ही कुशल हैं। इसका सारा श्रेय, इनके शिक्षक श्री **जियालाल 'वसन्त'** को जाता है। श्री 'वसन्त' जी यहां के म्युनिसिपल स्कूलों में जाते हैं और संगीत सीखने की योग्यता रखने वाले बच्चों को ढूंढ लाते हैं और यहां निकेतन में उन्हें 'फ्री' शिक्षा देते हैं। यहां गरीब बच्चों से कोई फीस नहीं ली जाती। प्रोग्राम इतने अच्छे ढंग से पेश करने के लिए मैं बच्चों को भी मुबारकबाद देता हूँ। यदि ये बच्चे किसी पर्दे के पीछे बैठकर अपना वादन प्रस्तुत करते तो श्रोता यही कहते की कोई उस्ताद या बड़ा कलाकार वाद्य बजा रहा है। मैं एक बार फिर प्रिंसिपल साहब को मुबारकबाद देता हूं। भगवान से मेरी प्रार्थना रहेगी की हमारे समाज के बच्चों की प्रतिभा को वे इसी प्रकार उभारते रहें। **आप पहले आदमी** हैं जिन्होंने बच्चों की प्रतिभा को एक जगह जमा किया है और उन्हें सही ढंग से ढालने की सफल कोशिश की है।"

श्री वसन्त को जिस तरह के वातावरण की ज़रूरत थी वह उन्हें यहाँ मिल गया था। उनके जीवन का सपना साकार होने लगा था। **सुरेश वाडकर** जैसा प्रसिद्ध पार्श्व-गायक इसी **वसन्त संगीत निकेतन** में तराशा गया कलाकार है। वसन्त जी के शिष्यों की संख्या सैकड़ों में है जिनमें से कई इस समय रेडियो, दूरदर्शन और फिल्म-जगत में खासा योगदान दे रहे हैं।

मुम्बई में साधना का यह सफर तय करते हुए श्री जियालाल 'वसन्त' का **तीसरा** कविता-संग्रह **'पतवार'**, सन् 1957 ई० में छपा। यह गीत-संग्रह वसन्त जी ने वहां, अपने बाल शिष्यों को ध्यान में रखकर प्रकाशित किया था। ये सभी गीत हिन्दी भाषा में रचे गये थे। किताब के, पहले आधे भाग में 50 हिन्दी गीत दिए गए हैं तथा किताब के दूसरे आधे भाग में इन गीतों की स्वर-लिपि दी गई है।

इन तीन प्रकाशित कविता-संग्रहों के अलावा श्री वसन्त ने 1985 ई० तक, (जिस वर्ष उनका देहान्त हुआ) उर्दू की लगभग 100-150 गज़लें तथा बाल-कलाकारों के लिए **"रिमझिम"** तथा **"संगच्छध्वम्"** (आओ, मिलकर चलें) दो शीर्षकों के अंतर्गत लगभग 60-65 गीत, उनकी स्वर-लिपियों के साथ, हस्तलेख के रूप में छोड़े थे। इनमें से उनके हिन्दी गीतों का संग्रह सन् 1991 ई० में छपा लेकिन उनकी उर्दू गज़लों का एक दीवान **'असासा'** नाम से अक्तूबर 1986 ई० में, देवनागरी लिपी में प्रकाशित किया गया था।

इसके अतिरिक्त 'वसन्त' जी की बेटी सुश्री प्रेम वसन्त ने एक पत्र के द्वारा मुझे सूचित किया था कि "इन प्रकाशित पांच पुस्तकों के अलावा श्री वसन्त जी की लिखी लगभग पंद्रह पांडुलिपियें छपने के लिए तैयार हैं, जो अभी छपी नहीं है।" इन सभी पांडुलिपियों का संबंध भारतीय शास्त्रीय संगीत-परम्परा से है।

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आशा है कि श्री 'वसन्त' जी की बेटी, **सुश्री प्रेम वसन्त** तथा उनके बेटे तुल्य शिष्य, **सुरेश वाडकर**, के पुरुषार्थ से ये पांडुलिपियें भी छप जाएंगी।

स्व० जिया लाल वसन्त का 72 वर्ष की आयु में, मुम्बई में ही निधन हुआ था। जुहू रोड, मुम्बई (P.C.400049) में एक भव्य चार मंज़िला भवन तैयार किया गया है जो उस साधक की स्मृति को चिरकाल तक कायम रखेगा। भवन का नाम है :

"आचार्य जियालाल 'वसन्त' संगीत निकेतन"

इस भवन का उद्घाटन समारोह, 1 मई, 1993 ई० के दिन महाराष्ट्र के उस समय के मुख्यमंत्री **श्री शरद पवार** के हाथों हुआ था।

स्व० श्री जियालाल वसन्त की स्मृति में, अर्पित अपनी इस श्रद्धांजलि के अन्त में, बम्बई में उनके मित्र, फिल्मी-जगत् के प्रसिद्ध म्यूज़िक डॉयरेक्टर, गीतकार तथा गायक, प्रज्ञाचक्षु **श्री रवीन्द्र जैन** द्वारा दी गई, एक कवितामयी श्रद्धांजलि को उद्धृत करता हूँ। यह कविता श्री जियालाल **'वसन्त'** के देहावसान के एक वर्ष बाद प्रकाशित की गई उनकी उर्दू गज़लों के संग्रह असासा के शुरू में दी गई है। यह उर्दू गज़ल-संग्रह, स्व. कवि की इच्छानुसार देवनागरी लिपि में प्रकाशित हुआ है।

इस संग्रह का संकलन-संपादन किया है **"फ़ौक जामी"** साहब ने, जिनका लिखा 3 पन्नों का एक खूबसूरत "तआरूफ" भी किताब के शुरू में छपा है।

श्री रविन्द्र जैन की कविता का उन्वान (शीर्षक) है :

नग्मों का पुजारी

अखनूर में था जन्मा, नग्मों का ये पुजारी,
बन कर "बसन्त" महका, नग्मों का ये पुजारी।
गुरु दीनानाथ जी से रागों का भेद जाना,
संगीत का यह आशिक, साहित्य का दीवाना,
था रक्स का भी शैदा, नग्मों का यह पुजारी।
चलता था साथ लेकर ये सोज़ो-साज़ दोनों,
थे इसकी ज़िन्दगी में नाज़ो-नियाज़ दोनों,

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दोनों से खेलता था, नग्मों का यह पुजारी।
जीवन बना लिया था संगीत का निकेतन,
ये बालकों में बालक, था बालकों को अर्पण,
ममता का एक पुतला, नग्मों का यह पुजारी।
निःशुल्क ज़िन्दगी भर, अनमोल ज्ञान बांटा,
बच्चे बुला बुलाकर, अपना मकान बांटा ।
उनमें रहेगा ज़िन्दा, नग्मों का यह पुजारी।

- रवीन्द्र जैन

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KASHMIR – THE LAND OF LOST OPPORTUNITIES

by

Tahir Mohi-ud-Din, Editor, CHATTAN (Weekly), Srinagar.

Kashmir has historically been a land of lost opportunities. There have been glimmers of hope, but in most cases, those glimmers have ended in mirages. The talk of addressing the political issues in this beleaguered land has remained hot far a while before it invariably ended up in throwing up bigger question marks on the sincerity of such efforts. The last state assembly elections in Kashmir have been a watershed in the political history of the state. After nearly seventy years, the regional national conference bowed out to become, perhaps, a part of the past, making way not only for a genuine alliance partnership, but more essentially paving way for another Valley-based alternative that has hardly anything by way of a lofty historical baggage. The fact that the People's Democratic Party (PDP) led by Mufti Mohammad Sayeed totally uprooted the National Conference from south Kashmir while making deep inroads into the rest of the so-called strong bastions of the state's former ruling party, needs be seen as a dynamic development. Politics has been called the art of the possible. This could not have been better demonstrated than by the decision of the centrist Congress party with 20 members in the 87-member state assembly to let the PDP take the lead in government formation with only 15 members. The Congress party for a while, was said to be playing the larger national card by allowing the reins of governance be manned by a political party that had emerged as a new force in Kashmir and whose regional commitments were unmistakable. A new era was taking shape in Kashmir's history. The old political order was dismantling, importantly in favour of a healthy, clean alternative that could no longer bask under the Sun of its history, but had to prove its relevance to the present. Even more important than the resulting change was the fact that those who participated in the last elections in Kashmir, irrespective of what their actual numbers might have been, gained a new confidence. They could choose their rulers and punish those they blamed for miss-governance. It was an idyllic setting for new bridges

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of confidence being laid between Kashmir and Delhi. Even the worst opponents of the electoral politics in Kashmir, the separatist politicians did not question either the fair conduct of those elections or their final results. They had all sorts of justifications to forward for not participating in those elections, but could not bring to disrepute the genuineness of those elections. Thanks to the single-minded commitment of the election commission, democracy had taken a giant leap in Kashmir notwithstanding certain inherent limitations with which such a process has always been laden here for the last fifty years. The alliance partners in the new state government made larger promises. The controversial anti-terror law, the POTA would not be extended to the state. The special operations group of the local police, which earned notoriety for extra-judicial murders, extortions and becoming a law unto itself, would be disbanded. Political prisoners and others languishing for many years in various jails and interrogation centers without serious charges would be released. Three months is hardly any period to pass a judgement on any government, much less a government that came to power in a state steeped in blood and confusion. A bold step has been taken and a great window opened for opportunity in a land that has been benighted by darkness, mistrust and intrigue. So far so good. But, opportunities have been blown in Kashmir in the past. They have been made subservient to petty politics in the past. They have died a miserable death under the feet of politicians and bureaucrats who had shamelessly narrow vision and objectives to serve. The compulsions of political expediency have often tied the hands of many who made mighty claims of giant leaps in Kashmir. A former Indian Prime Minister, who could otherwise never be blamed for overstatement, even said that the Sky was the limit when it came to solving a national issue like Kashmir. It was proved in very short time, that Narasimha Rao's 'sky' was even lower than a cheap umbrella that could not accommodate more than one person under it. It has been the next elections for, the Indian rulers and the urgency to stay in power, often without elections, for those in Pakistan that finally decide matter when it comes to handling a hot potato like Kashmir for them. Emotions and blackmail have often being blamed by Indian and Pakistani rulers for becoming great stumbling blocks in resolving the Kashmir dispute, but an honest answer as to who churns up both emotion and blackmail in the two countries about Kashmir would expose the finer designs of both the leaderships. Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has not budged an inch from the stand that has traditionally been taken by various Indian Premiers and the ultimate truth has now been stated by the Pakistani President, Genera Pervaiz Musharraf when he said that Kashmir is a compulsion for him and his country. That is a great admission and an honest one of course, but the problem is where do all the bold initiatives including a fair election and political power being wielded by the people themselves ultimately lead to when stands are so calcified? To what end is a dialogue process if its

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outcome is to follow a pre-determined and non-negotiable course? What is the use of Kashmiris re-affirming their faith in the electoral democratic process when their larger political aspirations remain unaddressed? Have the last state assembly elections in Kashmir been an end in itself or the means to an end? What happens after enough diplomatic mileage has been drawn by Delhi from the fact that elections were made possible in Kashmir despite the looming threat of the separatist gun? I said in the beginning, Kashmir has historically been a land of lost opportunities.

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JOURNALIST Vs. 'DARBAR'

by

O. P. Saraf.

It is widely known how Lala Mulk Raj Saraf, my father, made history in 1924 by bringing out 'Ranbir' through his steady efforts for more than three years to persuade the then ruler Maharaja Pratap Singh to permit its publication. But was this permission conditional in any manner? This question has always baffled not a few journalists and others interested in the modern history of J&K. The question mark arose when the succeeding ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, banned 'Ranbir' on May 9, 1930, in the sixth year of its existence on the charge that it had published a report "in connection with the arrest in British India of Mr.Gandhi" in a manner that constituted a "flagrant breach of the undertaking given by Lala Mulk Raj Saraf when permission was given by the State Council to him to start the Ranbir vide State Council resolution No. VIII dated 18th March 1924".

As to the precise reason why the Maharaja had been upset by the report in 'Ranbir' his order pin-pointed that 'the whole meaning and implication of the account is to convey that I and my Government either actively promoted the demonstration or at least connived at it or showed indifference as long as it was non-violent in character. It has been a cordial article of faith with me to observe scrupulously my Treaty obligations with the British Government. One of these obligations, according to the practice of civilized Governments, is not to countenance or permit any demonstration within my territory against the British Government. It has given me great pain to find that the published mis-statements violate this fundamental political principle".

On the other hand, what hurt the father most was that he should be accused of a breach of an undertaking which was neither asked for nor given at any time.

Co-founder of the JDGD Saraf Trust with more than 50 years' standing as a journalist. He has worked for Reuters and AFP besides national dailies like Hindustan Times and Indian Express. He accompanied Sheikh Abdullah to Pakistan in 1964 and was nominated as MLC (Member Legislative Council, the Upper House of the bicameral J&K Legislature) in 1975 for a six-year term.

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Thirty-seven years later, in 1967 he recorded in his book "Fifty Years As a Journalist" that "The Ranbir was thus sacrificed at the altar of political exigency. The question of breach of any conditions did not arise at all". The mystery had deepened because the 'Darbar' in its wisdom never deemed it proper to make available to him even the copy of either the State Council resolution of March 1924 (permitting the publication) or the Maharaja's Order of May 1930 (banning it). On both occasions he was merely informed of the operative portions – a style of official functioning which was common those days and which was actually legalized under a specific order by Maharaja Hari Singh on August 7, 1930, stating amongst other things that "it will be open to the Minister concerned to refuse to grant any copy in question when it is undesirable or inexpedient".

Recently I have been able to procure Photostat copies of both the State Council proceedings of March 1924 permitting the publication of 'Ranbir' and the Royal Order of May 1930 banning it (father had an unauthenticated copy of the latter which he had published in his autobiography). A plain reading of these documents makes the whole position clear. It was a special meeting of the State Council held at Jammu on Tuesday, March 18, 1924, at 4 P.M. with Maharaja Pratap Singh in the chair, that had adopted Resolution VIII granting permission to start 'Ranbir'. Such closely guarded secrets of pre-1947 period are now open to public view at the State Archives Repository, Jammu.

Interestingly, Maharaja Hari Singh who was then a Raja and also Senior and Foreign Member of the State Council was present at the crucial meeting which had also been attended by Revenue Member Janak Singh, Home and Law Member A.D. Hakim, Public Works Member Chowdhary Khushi Mohammed, Finance and Police Member B.J. Glancy and Member for Commerce and Industries D.N. Nagarkatti. According to the proceedings book the meeting considered a lengthy memorandum No. 11337-363-S.C. dated February 18, 1924, from the Member for Commerce and Industries arguing at length in favour of "an application from Lala Mulk Raj Saraf B.A., a hereditary subject of the State belonging to a Mahajan family of Sambha for starting a paper as well as a printing press in the State". Mr. Nagarkatti had, however, added that the requisite permission might be accorded "on the distinct understanding that he will devote the paper to such matters as may be calculated to bring about educational, economic and industrial improvement and that he will abstain from printing or publishing:

(i) Anything which may caused hatred or ill feeling towards each other amongst the various classes and sects of people in the State or may cause religious irritation among them.

(ii) Anything on matters of political nature whether they relate to the Jammu and Kashmir State or the British Empire or any Indian State.

(iii) Any criticism of administrative measures adopted in the Jammu and Kashmir State or the British Empire or any Indian State.

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(iv) Any remarks against any officer occupying an official position in the State, the British empire or any Indian State".

Mr. Nagarkatti further observed that should his proposal commend itself to the Council he would request the Law Member "for a draft of the bond which Lala Mulk Raj will be required to execute before he avails of the permission". Fortunately, the State Council chose to simply resolve "that the permission asked for be granted under Section 5 of the J&K Press and Publications Regulation of 1971". The resolution was numbered VIII as it dealt with item No: 8 on the agenda. The State Council manifestly in its wisdom did not attach any strings to the permission – of course, beyond Section 5 of the Press and Publications Regulation which dealt with the form in which a person bringing out a newspaper was required to make and subscribe the necessary declaration before the local Magistrate. The long pending riddle is thus solved. Certain conditions did exercise the mind of Mr. Nagarkatti but nothing inched forward. The time had arrived for the30-year old youngman who had already been trained as a journalist at the feet of Lala Lajpat Rai at Lahore, to herald the birth of Press in J&K.

What then prompted Maharaja Hari Singh six years later to sign the Order which he did on May 9, 1930? There is a possibility of a mischief having been played by a powerful Englishman at that time, Mr. G.E.C. Wakefield, Raja Hari Singh's Chief Secretary in 1924 who had risen to become Maharaja Hari Singh's Foreign and Political Minister by 1930. He indeed played an important role in the rise and fall of Maharaja Hari Singh. About that some other time

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FREEDOM FOR RULERS ALONE

As 'Ranbir' took birth in June 1924, there was no private printing press in Jammu. The one had to be set up. "With extremely meager resources at my disposal" recorded Lala Mulk Raj Saraf in his autobiography "I could hardly afford to establish a power-driven plant. It was therefore, decided to have a hand-driven litho press". It was eight years later 1932 that this was replaced by an electrical machine. With certain liberalization of Press Act by then, other newspapers had started coming into being, which also availed themselves of the new printing press. In turn, this made the veteran journalist responsible under law not only for what appeared in 'Ranbir' but also for what was published in other local papers and for other material such as posters and pamphlets printed at his press. Consequently there was more of confrontation with the State government: This continued even after Sheikh Abdullah had assumed office as Prime Minister and even after the establishment of the sovereign J&K. Constituent Assembly in November 1951. Even though the autocratic rule was abolished, the people at large including journalists continued to be deprived of democratic rights for almost a decade after 1947 till the now State Constitution came into force on January 26, 1957.

A mention may be made of a case when even the State High Court proved helpless. Sheikh Abdullah's Cabinet had held an article published in a local newspaper derogatory to their regime. As it was printed at the printing Press owned by Lala Mulk Raj Saraf, he was ordered to deposit a cash security of Rs. 1000/- with the District Magistrate Jammu. Considering this to be out of tune with the spirit of the times, he approached the High Court for setting aside the Cabinet order. The prayer was dismissed by the Full Bench *inter alia* observing: "There is no doubt that the right of freedom of discussion and the liberty of the press as fundamental doctrines of democracy... But at the same time the Court has to construe the Act as it is. The Court is bound to give effect to the language of the Act as long as it is in existence even though it thinks that the provisions of the Act have not kept pace with the changed time".

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THE HISTORIC ORDER

(This self-explanatory Order by Maharaja Hari Singh has assumed importance for reasons more than one—bringing into sharp focus the fear of the British Government instilled in the mind of the Ruler who, for his part, would prove his loyalty by banning publication of the only newspaper in Jammu and Kashmir even for non-existent grounds.

"My attention has been drawn to the account in the special issue of the Ranbir dated Baisakh 25, Samvat 1987 (corresponding to May 7, 1930) of the disgraceful demonstrations which lately took place in the city of Jammu in connection with the arrest in British India of Mr. Gandhi. The account in question not only gives unnecessary prominence to an affair with which my people have no concern but is highly malicious and grossly misleading so far as the intention and policy of myself and my Government and the conduct of the police in relation to the demonstrations in question is concerned. The intensity of public feeling, the strength of the crowd assembled on the occasion, the number of women and school and college boys attending the demonstrations, the extent of the hartal and its so-called spontaneous character, have all been highly exaggerated and misrepresented. Not content with such willful misrepresentations the account contains among other inaccuracies the following misstatements:

[*(i) The Maharaja controlled the situation through his wisdom and understanding (ii) It was on the lips everywhere that the Maharaja had directed there be no interference so long as the procession remain peaceful (iii) The City Inspector Police and a sub-inspector police came to the students and called some of their leaders to tell them that since they had demonstrated enough they should now disperse (iv) In every part of the city the students raising national slogans and shouting 'jaikare' of the Maharaja (v) The whole atmosphere was resounding with national slogans. Slogans of 'Maharaja Bahadur ki-jai" were also being raised.*]

"More can be quoted but the above extracts will suffice to show that the whole meaning and implication of the account is to convey that I and my Government either actively promoted the demonstration or at least connived at it or showed indifference as long as it was non-violent in character. It is unnecessary for me to repudiate such an allegation, which carries its own refutation. I have all along held the view that it is not for me, my Government or my people to interfere in the affairs of British India and it has been a cordial article of faith with me to observe scrupulously my Treaty obligations with the British Government. One of these obligations, according to the practice of civilized Governments, is not to countenance or permit any political demonstration within

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my territory against the British Government. It has given me great pain to find that the extracts to which I refer above violate this fundamental political principle. They also constitute a flagrant breach of the undertaking given by the Editor and Proprietor Lala Mulk Raj Saraf when permission was given by the State Council to him to start the Ranbir vide State Council Resolution No. VIII dated March 18, 1924. I hereby direct that the permission accorded to the publication of the Ranbir the immediately cancelled and further publication stopped.

"In issuing this Order I desire to make it quite clear that it is not my intention to curb in any way the legitimate expression of opinion or fair and just criticism of the policy and acts of my self and my Government. The Policy regarding these matters will continue unchanged and I shall be quite willing to entertain applications whether in Jammu or Kashmir or both from other journalists wishing to start another newspaper or newspapers within State territory so long as their bonafides are not in question".

Sd/—
Hari Singh
Maharaja (Jammu)
G.C.I.E., K.C.V.O

May 9, 1930

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ADULT EDUCATION 50 YEARS AGO

"Those who feel with me that Adult Education is a significant need of times should not feel discouraged by the present indifferent attitude of the Government. They should rather take it up as a challenge to their sense of self-respect and patriotism and intensify the movement by all means at their disposal... It is not an activity that can be taken up in a light mood or with a view to gaining the goodwill of those whose favours some workers are anxious to earn. Adult education, apart from raising the civic standard of the people and training them, both men and women, for better living, is a potent weapon in a country like India, which is on the threshold of great social and political advancement. Adult education is a serious business, which will claim the whole earnestness, intelligence and patriotism of those engaged in it. But the return to the worker would be much ampler than what he contributes. He will come in contact with and learn at first hand the conditions of life what is vulgarly and very expressively called the underdog, and if he is endowed with a heart that feels, he will dedicate his all to ameliorate the lot of this large class of people. When that day dawns the future of the masses and hence of humanity will be less despondent that it is today:.

— An extract from Lala Mulk Raj Saraf's Presidential Address at the Fourth Northern India Adult Education Conference inaugurated by renowned educationist Mr. K.G. Saiyidain at Srinagar on August 30, 1943.

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PRESS FREEDOM: A HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE

by

Prof. Hari Om, Dean Social Sciences and former Head of the History Department, University of Jammu.

The National Conference is frantically soliciting the Union Government's support for a political set up as it existed in Jammu and Kashmir on August 9, 1953, when Sheikh Abdullah was removed from the post of Prime Minister and arrested him for his statement of July 12, 1953. His statement read like this: "We have been opposed the (the State's) merger (with India) and we will oppose it" (in future too). In other words, the National Conference wants a system similar to that which existed in the State between 1939 and 1957, under which all the powers – legislative, executive and judicial – were vested in the ruler or the ruling party.

The most disturbing aspect of the situation is the unstinted support the National Conference's formulations are getting from a section of the Press, which obviously has no idea whatsoever of the plight of the Press in the State before January 26, 1957, when the State Constituent Assembly repealed the highly oppressive and anti-democratic Jammu and Kashmir Constitutional Act of 1939 and adopted a new constitution, recognizing the people's natural right to shape and mould political, administrative and economic policy, and granting the Press full freedom.

PARAMETERS

Before the adoption of the new constitution, the Press had to discharge its responsibilities strictly within the parameters of the State Press and Publication Act of 1932. Under this Act, the ruling elite could seize any press it wanted and impose a heavy fine for publication of any article deemed by the authorities to be "seditious".

That journalists then could not report and comment freely on happenings in the State can be seen from the Cabinet decision [No. 137-C of February 15, 1952] to invoke the rather harsh sub-section 3 of section 9 and 19[I][d] of the Act and confront the "father of journalism" in the State, Mulk Raj Saraf, with a choice between a fine of rupees 1,000 and closure of his press. The specific charge against Saraf was that he had sought to provoke a sort of rebellion against the

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"government established by law" by publishing the article, "Kansa rule and atrocities on children a good omen", on February 8, 1952.

The charge that Saraf had attempted to inflame popular feelings through the impugned article, published in the Kashmir Mail, was absolutely baseless. The author of the impunged article had only catalogued chronologically details of the atrocities of the police and the army had perpetrated on students of the G.G.M. Science College and schools in Jammu between January 15 and February 7, 1952. At the end he had warned that such brutal actions against the children would only lead to a revolt against the "cruel government of Sheikh Abdullah". The only crime of the students was, it may be mentioned, that they had vehemently opposed the Sheikh's resolve to "hoist the National Conference flag in the Science College" on January 15. The students had, in addition, objected to the "National Conference flag being placed side by side with the national flag" [the National Conference flag became the State flag only on January 26, 1957].

There was absolutely nothing in the impunged article and in what the students had done which could in any way be construed as "seditious". It is indeed a paradox and Sheikh Abdullah, who had rejected the Press and Publication Act of 1932 as fundamentally bad, most reactionary, retrograde and fatal to the people's legitimate civil rights and had sought to combat it and the policy underlying it during 1932-1947, should apply the same act with utmost zeal to muzzle the Press and deprive the people of their right to react against the official measures or actions considered anti-democratic.

Saraf did raise his voice against government high-handedness. But the Sheikh and his Cabinet did not pay any heed. Saraf consequently approached Jammu and Kashmir High Court for justice. His counsel, R.C. Nanda, had argued before the full-bench, consisting of Chief Justic Janaki Nath Wazir, Justice Jia Lal Kilm and Justice M.A. Shahmiri, that "there was nothing in the article which tended directly or indirectly to bring into hatred and contempt the government". He had further contended that the "words" used in the article were "merely claptrap phrases" and could not be considered to be "objectionable".

INTENTION

Nanda also referred to the judgment of the Board of Judicial Advisors in Prem Nath Bazaz versus State [J&K Law Reports, Volume IV, page 100], in which it has been observed that "an article should be dealt with a fair and liberal spirit, not picking out an objectionable sentence here or a strong word there or giving undue importance to inflated or turbid language, but looking at the real intention and spirit of the article. It is also to be remembered that mere abusive epithets, declamations, invectives, turbid language will not necessarily bring the writing under condemnation. What really counts is whether, on a

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perusal of the article as a whole, one can come to the conclusion that they have tendency to create a feeling of hatred or contempt or disaffection against the government in the mind of the ordinary average man who reads the newspaper". In short, Nanda had maintained that the Press should have the liberty to "criticize the actions of the government and comment upon matters of public import".

The Full Bench was entirely in accord with Saraf's counsel. So much so, it had observed that "there is no doubt that the right to freedom of discussion and the liberty of the Press are fundamental doctrines of democracy and [that] it will indeed be an evil day for the State if the provisions of the Press and Publication Act are invoked for stifling the fair comments or criticism, or for preventing the ventilation of genuine grievances of the public on the ground that they are likely to create feelings of disaffection against the government in the minds of the public. Such an unfortunate happening this court will always consider its duty to prevent..."

LANGUAGE

However, in its April 5, 1952 judgment on the Mulk Raj Saraf versus State [Criminal original No. 5 of 1952], the full Bench expressed its inability to set aside the Cabinet Order on the ground that "the court has to construe the Act as it is and that it is bound to give effect to the language of the Act so long as it is in existence even though it thinks that the provisions of the Act have not kept pace with the changed time."

But this was not the first occasion when the High Court had demonstrated its helplessness in view of the existing Constitution and statues whose "final interpreter shall be the State Council of Ministers" [section 75 of the Jammu and Kashmir Constitutional Act of 1939]. It had done so many a times in the past and during 1952-57.

We must take a serious notice of the status of Press and the people in the State before the introduction of the new Constitution in 1957 and work for a political system that recognizes the supreme importance of the Press and dissent in a democratic polity like ours. Failure on our part to do so would simply embolden anti-democratic forces. The National Conference's demand for a return to the "pre-1953 position", or for the withdrawal of the Central laws and institutions from Jammu and Kashmir should be viewed in this context. It would be only prudent if the Press refuses to walk into the trap of the National Conference.

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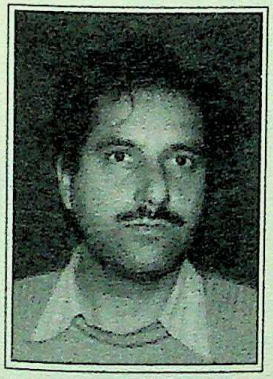
'RANBIR' ON THE SHELVES OF TIHAR JAIL LIBRARY

by



Iftikhar Gilani, Delhi Bureau Chief of Kashmir Times, was arrested on false charges of violating Official Secrets Act and subsequently discharged honourably.

I knew Lala Mulk Raj Saraf only as father of journalism in Jammu and Kashmir, till I was sent to spend almost seven months in Tihar's Jail No. 3 in June 2002. Sometime around August, I was shifted to Indira Gandhi University (IGNOU) ward, which had a library and few computers which never worked. Though jail authorities would get a slouch of funds from Delhi government every year for purchasing books for the library but its poor shelves remained stocked with old books donated and discarded by the Delhi Public Library.

Amongst the heaps of dusty books, once I laid my hands on two old issues of 'Ranbir'. The treasure for any researcher on Kashmir had gone through such a wear and tear that even reading dates needed a microscope. But, the print almost stunned me. It had chronicled the stand of Hindu Maha Sabha on the issue of State's accession with India. It was a news for me that Hindu Maha Sabha was supporting the independence of Jammu and Kashmir, almost the stand akin to present day JKLF. On May 1947, the paper reported the Working Committee of the Jammu and Kashmir Rajya Hindu Sabha had passed a resolution reiterating its faith in the Maharaja and extending its support to whatever he was doing or might do on the issue of accession. The Sabha leaders had argued that a 'Hindu State' should not merge its identy in a secular India.

It was further a surprise for me that Maharaja had declined to join the Constituent Assembly of India set up in 1946. Hindu Maha Sabha and Muslim Conference had publicly supported Maharaja's move. Lala ji had editorially commented in the Ranbir on the issue. Criticising Hindu leaders, the paper wrote, "these leaders who are chanting slogan of independence were blind in their anti-Congressism." The paper was banned for pleading the case of accession to India and the release of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah.

Lala Mulk Raj Saraf was the publicly spirited youth who donned the honour of publishing the State's first newspaper weekly 'Ranbir', named after Maharaja Ranbir Singh. The paper started from Jammu in June 1924. Despite

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moderate views, it was ordered to stop publication in May 1930 for having published proceedings of a procession taken out in the city to protest against the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi by British Government. The announcement of Maharaja as recorded by historian Justice (rtd) Mohammad Yusuf Saraf was as follows. "it is not my intention to curb in any way the legitimate expression of the policy and acts of myself and my Government. The policy regarding these matters will continue unchanged and I shall be quite willing to entertain applications whether in Jammu or Kashmir from other journalist wishing to start another newspaper or newspapers within the State territory so long as the bonfides are not in question." In his presidential address at the Newspapers Editors Conference held in Srinagar on August 20, 1942, Lalaji described a newspaper, an echo of public voice. "And what is the public voice? Nothing but the voice of truth; vox populi vox dei- the voice of the people is the voice of God. A journalist who hesitates in raising his voice for upholding truth and justice cannot deserve the honour of being called an editor, he is just like a beggar who use his paper as a beggar's bowl."

On the duties of editor, father of Kashmir journalism says, "so far as the primary duty of an editor is concerned, he has to discharge it honestly and wholeheartedly. He has to cater for almost all the shades of interest and taste of his readers and not limit it exclusively to his personal choice. In the publication of news he has to bear in mind that they are based on true facts."

He further states, "one true news is worth than millions of false and baseless rumours. Another guiding principle of true journalism is that a newspaper should in no case be made an instrument for guiding one's own axe. An editor should see that his very personality is lost in the glorification of high ideals. The tenets of journalism go so far as to require of him to invariably merge the first person singular 'I' into plural 'we'. He should act as a mirror to be public opinion losing his identity in it. So far as the creation and formation of public opinion is concerned, the duty of an editor is all the more difficult." On duties of a journalist, he spelles out, "a journalist has to keep his readers abreast of the changing events of the ever changing world, expose the crooked designs of the authorities and to give vent to the public opinion in such a way that its grievances may be redressed, wrongs rectified, rights preserved and democratic principles upheld. In short, the all-round duties of a journalist consist in condemning high-handedness, uprooting cruelty, defending the oppressed and the downtrodden, putting a stop to injustice, helping to provide food for the hungry and employment for the unemployed, removed social evils, and imparting education to the public.

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HE KNEW NO FEAR NOR UNTRUTH

by

B.P. Sharma

Lala Mulk Raj Saraf was recipient of felicitations from all over the country and even from friends abroad as he brought out the 'Ranbir' in June 1924. Its 18th anniversary in 1942 and Silver Jubilee in 1949 were other occasions when the services rendered by the 'Ranbir' and its editor were widely acknowledged. It ceased publication in 1950 which only gave a new edge to his role as a journalist. He then represented most of the national dailies in Jammu and Kashmir. Over the years he worked hard to be ranked amongst the most distinguished journalists. He then represented most of the national dailies in Jammu and Kashmir. Over the years he worked hard to be ranked amongst the most distinguished journalists in the country. He was admittedly way ahead of others with more than 70 years' uninterrupted dedication to the Fourth Estate when he left us early in 1989.

In the course of his long innings he had to deal with three of the five rulers of the Dogra dynasty that ruled J&K for more than 100 years in addition to other Heads of State who were in the saddle later on. They were Maharaja Pratap Singh, Maharaja Hari Singh and Dr. Karan Singh who had the distinction of having acted as the Regent, the first and the only duly-elected Sadar-i-Riyasat and as Governor without a break for 18 years, to be succeeded by Bhagwan Sahay, L.K. Jha, B.K. Nehru and Jagmohan in that order. All of them held him in great esteem.

Maharaja Pratap Singh had taken more than three years to grant permission to publish the 'Ranbir' but he then got himself enrolled as one of its earliest subscribers and sanctioned a special annual subscription of Rs. 100/- as against the usual rate of Rs. 4/- only. He would get the 'Ranbir' read out to him regularly to keep himself abreast with happenings around. Even though Maharaja Hari Singh characterized the 'Ranbir' as a pioneering enterprise, he had to ban it twice first in 1930 when he

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The author is a former Station Director of All India Radio and had earlier served the Jammu and Kashmir Government as its Director of Information. His association with Lala Mulk Raj Saraf dates back to 1927 when as a student he started working for the 'Ranbir' as its correspondent in Srinagar.

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felt that it had jeopardized his treaty obligations with the British Government, and then in 1947 for its persistent pleading for the State's accession to India well before the crucial day of August 15. Three decades later, Governor Bhagwan Sahay gave him a Robe of Honour and Rs. 3000/- "in recognition of his pioneering role in the field of journalism". In 1976 Rashtrapati Fakhr-ud-din Ali Ahmed decorated him with 'Padma Shri'.

Lala Mulk Raj Saraf had to put up with almost a score of Prime Ministers (also called Chief Ministers at times and Senior & Foreign Minister in the case of Raja Hari Singh under Maharaja Pratap Singh). No administration can function without the weapons of 'secrecy in public interest' while no journalist worth his salt can rest without tearing apart the veil of secrecy when it serves none but self-seekers. Lala Mulk Raj Saraf was thus inevitably involved in 'battles royal' always emerging with flying colours, thereby establishing worthy conventions of fearless and truthful journalism in the State.

Major-General Dewan Bishan Das was the Chief Minister who had advised Maharaja Pratap Singh early in 1921 not even to entertain Lala Mulk Raj Saraf's first application "for starting a weekly journal at Jammu". Twenty-eight years later when the 'Ranbir' brought out its Silver Jubilee issue, the aged Major-General conceded that "Lala Mulk Raj Saraf made the impossible possible by dint of his determination and ability", adding that he was still getting it read out to him (his eye-sight was failing at that time).

Amongst a dozen dignitaries who served Maharaja Hari Singh as Prime Minister, N. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar's tenure was the longest (1937-43). Hardly had he assumed office when lala Mulk Raj Saraf was "manhandled, arrested and locked-up in the City Police Station" and then externded from Jammu. Ayyangar became a senior Union Minister under Jawahar Lal Nehru in Independent India when he gracefully recorded "I remember reading the 'Ranbir' regularly when I was in Kashmir. Its outlook was progressive throughout and while it gave expression to fairly strong criticism, it was not afraid of supporting those in authority when it felt that they were in the right". Likewise Prime Minister Col. EJD Colvin (1932-37), B.N. Rau (1943) and Mehr Chand Mahajan (1947) were all praise for him. In contrast, R.C. Kak (1945-47) made his presence felt by carrying out his own order "starve Mr. Saraf to submission". Shortly afterwards, Kak brought himself, the Maharaja and the people to grief – and was faced with criminal proceedings which landed him in the Central Jail, Srinagar, to undergo two years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 10,000/-. His 'sworn enemy' Sheikh Abdullah let him off within days after taking over as Head of the Administration on October 31, 1947, in the wake of tribal invasion.

It may be pointed out here that the 'Ranbir' continued as a weekly for almost 20 years. I can think of no other weekly published from any Princely State which enjoyed such popularity and prestige from the Day One. Those who welcomed it from abroad included Dr.Siddheshwar Varma, Dr. Barkat Ram, Mr. Jagmohan Ram (CS (all from England), Thakar Haqiqat Singh Jamwal (USA), Sheikh Abdullah Khan (Afghanistan) and Lala Devi Chand Uppal (Iraq) besides the well-known revolutionary Lala Har Dayal

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who in a letter from Sweden hailed it as a significant event in the annals of Princely India. Such appreciation at home and abroad prompted lala Mulk Raj Saraf to bring out a separate edition from the summer capital, for which I was asked to file a declaration as required under law – with myself as its Resident Editor. The District Magistrate, Srinagar, accepted the declaration in October 1932. Since, however, the printing arrangements could not be through satisfactorily, the proposal was dropped. The weekly turned bi-weekly on August 30, 1943, and a daily on December 1, 1946. Early in 1941 an experiment to publish the last page in Hindi had flopped due to insufficient public response. In February 1945, the Government had refused permission to convert the bi-weekly 'Ranbir' in a daily.

Leaders of all shades of public opinion were unanimous in holding that 'Ranbir' was a trustworthy newspaper of independent and unbiased character. If Sheikh Abdullah testified it as "leader of thought in many matters", Ghulam Abbas who later became the Supreme Head of 'Azad Kashmir' observed that "one happy feature of the 'Ranbir' is that it considers as its duty to criticize the Government when so required". Prem Nath Dogra, for his part, conceded that "from its very inception the 'Ranbir' has been a great supporter of the rights of the people irrespective of religion, caste or creed". My senior JN Zutshi, Director-General Information & Broadcasting, J&K Government, who was arrested in August 1953, significantly wrote on Lala Mulk Raj Saraf's 80th birthday. "I must confess today that after I myself became a victim, I realised how important even a single vote of dissent is to the functioning of true democracy. It was the irrepressible and dissenting Lala Mulk Raj Saraf who raised a protest against my illegal detention and the detention of some of my colleagues". Need I mention that I myself was one of those colleagues as Principal Information officer of the Government?

Curiously enough the 'Ranbir' disappeared from the scene on May 18, 1950, when Sheikh Abdullah was in power following acute differences between the two. Subsquently the Sheikh himself was in political wilderness for more than 22 years. It is a moot point whether he was any wiser or sadder when he persuaded himself to be at the helm of State affairs again in February 1975 but he certainly left nobody in doubt about his old admiration for Lala Mulk Raj Saraf who had meanwhile immensely grown in eminence and stature. "The best service that we can do to the country is to emulate the example set by him" said the Sheikh more than once both in Jammu and Srinagar in his public utterances. After him, Dr. Farooq Abdullah's Government honoured the 'Father of Journalism' at a reception on his 90th birthday.

Understandably Lala Mulk Raj Saraf was the happiest in the company of Journalists young and old. Renowned editor of yester-years like Devadas Gandhi (Hindustan Times), G. Kasturi (Hindu), Tushar Kanti Ghosh (A.B. Patrika), Rana Jung Bahadur Singh (Times of India), Durga Das (INFA), Prem Bhatia (Tribune), M. Chalapati Rau (National Herald), Moulana Zafar Ali Khan (Zamindar), Mahasha Krishan (Pratap) and Mahasha Khushal Chand (Milap) spoke highly of the veteran who knew no fear no untruth. When the Indian Federation of Working Journalists (IFWJ) resolved to honour him early in 1985, its

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President K. Vikram Rao wrote to him: "We wish to honour ourselves by honouring you. A grateful IFWJ wants to remember you as a light house amidst us". Earlier, he had been warmly received by Jean-Maurice Hermann of France and his colleagues who organized the First World Congress of Journalists at Helsinki (Finland) which he attended to set up the International Organisation of Journalists. In 1979 when he visited Pakistan, several newspapers in special articles recalled his handsome contribution in the development of healthy journalism in the sub-continent. Of his travelogue "Meri Pakistan Yatra" (My pilgrimage to Pakistan) which received the "Book of the year" award by the J&K Cultural Academy, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas in a full-page article in the 'Blitz' wrote that Lala Mulk Raj Saraf's one-man mission to Pakistan had achieved that measure of goodwill which was beyond the competence of diplomatic resources even after spending millions of rupees. "Pakistan Times" nearly echoed the same sentiment in a three-column write-up which concluded thus: "One can only wish we had many more visitors to Pakistan like him – acting like ambassadors of peace, goodwill and humanity".

Lala Mulk Raj Saraf's role in enriching Urdu language and literature was noteworthy. The 'Ranbir' (1924-50) and its sister publication the 'Rattan' (1934-47) and his two publishing concerns Rajmahal Publishers and Ranbir Publications made a remarkable contribution in this behalf in the second quarter of the twentieth century, thus making it the glorious period in the history of this language. Ramnand Sagar, Krishan Chander, 'Rasa' Jawdani, Prem Nath Pardesi, Ved Rahi and many others have gratefully acknowledged his influence on their formative years in lighting up their literary careers. The master-pieces like "Naghma-e-Javed" (translation of Gita in Urdu verse) by 'Asar' Lakhnavi, "Pancham Manham" by Mohd Umar Noor Alahi, "Hamari Dunia" and "Kirnen" by Pardesi and dozens of other Urdu titles by authors like Kundan Lal, Raja Mehdi Ali Khan, Latif Farooqi and 'Asar' Sehbai were published by him. During 1965-68, the 'Sach' – a popular Urdu daily of Jammu, published a weekly series of 140 articles by him focusing on his life and times. In his last decade he authored three Urdu books namely "Meri Pakistan Yatra", "Insaniyat Abhi Zindah Hai" and "Naqoosh-e-Ranbir" in addition to a couple of English works. The poet laureate of Rajasthan Urdu Akademi, wrote about him: "So long as there are writers in Urdu like Lala Mulk Raj Saraf, who dare say thefuture of this language is bleak?" Ali Jawad Zaidi, an ex-President of Uttar Pradesh urdu Akademi, was impressed by his "boundless capacity to convert the sincerity of his mind in words full of life". Lala Mulk Raj Saraf extended full support to Dogri renaissance as well and authored first biography in Dogri. It was an abridged edition of his voluminous Urdu work on the life of great Dogra social reformer Lala Hans Raj Vakil (1866-1944). He headed the seven-member delegation on behalf of the Dogri Sanstha to participate in the First All-India Cultural Conference held in the Red Fort, Delhi, in March, 1951.

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KASHMIR REPORTAGE: CHALLENGES BEFORE THE MEDIA

By Arun Joshi

Reporting Kashmir was never an easy assignment. It has become difficult by day. Today Kashmir offers insurmountable challenges to media in reporting the events because each happening has its more than one version. That is what makes the task more complex and challenging.

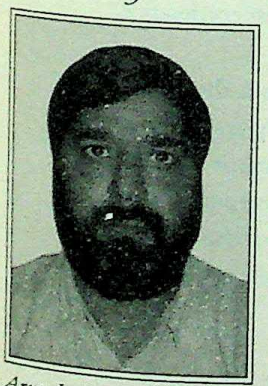
What is a success story for the security forces in eliminating militants, it often is dubbed as a case of custodial death. The chase against militants is seen as a trouble for the common people because they suffer in any operation. Their houses used forcibly by militants as hideouts are blasted to get rid of them. The owners are obviously said over this because even this destruction does not help them to prevent the entry of militants to their homes in future.

Reporters have to sift truth out of all this. Any tilt to any particular version is considered a bias and the reporter's credibility is instantly put to question. The journalists tread cautiously. But that caution has not prevented them from being caught in the cross fire of charges and counter charges. Some of them were shot and others were worried about their lives every time a colleague fell to the bullets or was blown up in parcel or car bombs.

Now it is not the militants alone but also the counter insurgents and private armies of the influential that cause problems for the media. As Kashmir generates international interest, the government, militants and others are keen to see their versions on the front pages or watch them on headlines of the satellite TV channels. If that doesn't happen, the reporters concerned are at the receiving end.

It was September 1995, the body of Mushtaq Ali, a video journalist was brought to his home from Sher-e-Kashmir Medical Institute. Mushtaq was killed in a parcel bomb explosion in the BBC's local office in Srinagar. One JKLF leader while making a speech termed some of the journalists as IB agents — something that was a clear signal to the militants to show zero tolerance to reporters because the tag of IB-Intelligence Bureau agent meant doing anything with the person to whom it was attached. Who delivered that parcel bomb was never found. One life was lost and other two had providential escape. But the way separatist leaders viewed journalists

by



Arun Joshi, Chief of Bureau (J&K), The Hindustan Times.

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was a matter of concern. Worse was the fact that the media could not put its act together and offer even a symbolic protest.

If Lassa Kaul, Director Doordarshan, Srinagar was killed for he worked for a Government run media organization, Shaban Vakil was gunned down for what, no one knew. There were condemnations over the killing of Shaban Vakil, who edited Urdu daily "Al-Safa" but no one was willing to point out the killers who silenced the voice of the journalist in his office chambers in Sarai Bala locality on April 23, 1991. There can only be clues no evidence. The journalist had criticized those enforcing "purdah" on Kashmiri women. He had posed a simple question how a village woman working in paddy fields could sow seeds or harvest the crop covered by veil. How a woman selling fish could do so in veil.

His pen had also questioned the wisdom of those calling for frequent general strikes. "Isn't it hitting the Kashmir economy", he had asked in the editorial in his newspaper of the day he was assassinated.

Severe abuses were reserved for journalists who reported that how the security forces went berserk and killed 37 protesters in Bijbehra on October 22, 1993. Their fault they had reported that there was no justification of opening fire on a procession taken out after Friday prayers to protest army's siege around Hazratbal shrine. As if the abuses were not enough, the cameras of the TV crews were smashed and cameras of photographers smashed and even the lady journalists were not spared. That was the face of the security forces. The questions were there: "What were the security forces trying to hide from media". Obviously facts and the graveyard where 37 graves were being dug at the time when journalists were assaulted.

Numerous such instances are there. These were the almost daily events in the Kashmir Valley where there were clashes between media and security forces or militants would send threats or ban sale of newspapers for one violation of their dictate or other. A journalist of a local newspaper suffered a heart stroke because at a press conference of Hizb-ul-Mujahadeen he was severely reprimanded by then Supreme Commander of the group Master Ahsan Dar. A reporter of a national daily had to request his desk a number of times to ensure that this press conference of the Hizb supreme commander appears. The reason was simple he was told by his colleagues that after having attended the press conference, he had to ensure that it was in print. Otherwise.....

If these hazards were there for the journalists in their daily operations by security forces or militants, there were other hazards as well. Pradeep Bhatia, press photographer of Hindustan Times was killed when he was trying to click a car laden with bomb. He was among the 17 people killed in that explosion at Residency Road in Srinagar on August 10, 2000.

That incident made headlines but there were daily such incidents where local journalists were harassed and intimidated. But there was no one to hear their voice. They were viewed with coloured glasses by their colleagues in rest of the country. That remains the case even today. That is the tragedy and dilemma of journalists of Kashmir who despite giving their best in profession are a subject of mistrust by their own world and colleagues.

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A BOLD AND COURAGEOUS SAGA CALLED 'RANBIR'

by
Sofi Ghulam Mohd, Editor-in-Chief, Srinagar Times.

There are two types of people who remember and recall Lala Mulk Raj Saraf on his 109th Birth anniversary. Those who knew him closely having professional relations with him. Those who had not seen him personally but heard about him are also in good number, they include young journalists of the new generation.

It is a general saying that journalism is a noble profession. Undoubtedly it is so. However, like other fields of life values in journalism also continue changing. Today's journalism is not as it was 75 years earlier. Wonderful developments in information technology have revolutionalised journalism. It has become much easier for journalists to collect news and information. Today incidents of all kinds reach him as they are. In the journalism of the present times there is less hard work but more glamour. Today's journalism is very fertile. Running a newspaper now-a-days is like buying anything from the market. However, there was a time when not to speak of actually starting a newspaper even to think of it was a complicated matter. That was the time people in our state did not even know as to what a newspaper is. In those times, it was indeed a highly courageous step by Lala Mulk Raj Saraf to familiarize the State people about journalism and then facing the black laws of the times to start a newspaper.

In the history of journalism in J&K State Lalaji will always be remembered as the pioneer. "The RANBIR" started by Lalaji was not only a newspaper but it was an inspiring ray of light which energized the hearts of suppressed people and gave them courageous voice.

I consider myself very lucky that I had occasion to talk to him and exchanged ideas on the current events. Whenever, Lalaji came to Srinagar the very first thing he would do was to call on the brother journalists. Even though due to old age he was not keeping a very good health still he would walk about a Km from his Pratap Park residential quarter and climb three story's of a high building to see me. Those days Srinagar had only four dailies viz 'Srinagar Times,' Aftab, 'Martand' and

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'Hamdard' started by Late Ghulam Rasool Arif. All these four papers must reach every morning Lalaji's quarter. Whenever by some reason he did not get Srinagar Times, he would ring me to know the reasons so. He was virtuously sold on journalism. Lalaji read those papers with great interest which had come out some years after ' 'The Ranbir'. In fact he wanted to study the developments which had come about in journalism with the passage of years.

In 1977, Srinagar Times Modern Offset Press was inaugurated. On the occasion Late Smt. Indira Gandhi had come as the Guest of Honour (that time she was not the Prime Minister) Sheikh Mohd. Abdullah Chief Minister chaired the function. Among the prominent persons present were late Mulana Sayeed Masoodi, late Mirza Afzal Beg, late Sofi Moh. Akbar, late Maulvi Mohd. Farooq, Sayeed Mir Quasim and Mufti Mohd. Sayeed.

In his speech then, Sheikh Sahib referring to journalism in the State specially focused on Lala Mulk Raj Saraf and said, "Keeping in view the nature of the function Lalaji ought to have been the Chief Guest." Paying tributes to lalaji, Sheikh Sahib highly lauded his efforts in pioneering journalism in the State.

Little has been written so far about history of journalism in Jammu & Kashmir. But whenever it is done, Lala Mulk Raj Saraf's name would top it. Today journalism has struck strong roots in the State. It embraces all fields of life underpinning the desires and aspirations of the people.

There was a time when political leaders provided journalists with the dope but today journalists provide the politicians with the food for thoughts. Foundations for the development were laid undoubtedly by the 'Father of Journalism' – Lala Mulk Raj Saraf three quarters of a century back. Today that welcome development is in its prime.

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HOPES REKINDLED

by

P.P. Wangchuk, Co-ordinating Editor, The Hindustan Times. He is the lone Ladakhi journalist working with the national press.

Ladakh (land of many mountain passes) inspires awe among the non-locals. But that is for its rugged beauty and "moonlike" features. Though physically it forms the rooftop of India, morally its people feel themselves assigned to the bottom of a pit. The successive governments in the state since Independence not only ignored it but also treated it with utter disgust and contempt.

Therefore, the new government in Jammu and Kashmir has rekindled a dying hope that there may yet be some future for non-Valleyites as well. The new Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, has come as a wave of fresh air much-needed for a mass of suffocating people, as it were, for decades.

One does not need to bother at this stage about what will be the scenario after a year or two. For, that won't serve any purpose and, moreover, that is not the right attitude. So long as there is an honest effort on the part of the Mufti government to win back the hearts of the people from all the three regions of the state, things are bound to change for the better. Maybe, it is a slow and irritating change.

The clearance of the mess created by the Farooq Abdullah government for years cannot be done so easily and quickly. Nobody bothered much that his (Farooq's) was a " family affair" and he got the Crown as a bestowal from his father, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. But that he took it as nothing more than a milch cow, was a serious aberration of duty and violation of the rights of the people. One would not be going off the mark in saying that Farooq Abdullah has been one of the principal instruments in destabilising the state-economically as well as politically. The economic mess produced the breeding grounds for frustration and helplessness among the people, particularly among the youth. And that played a direct role in the rise of terrorism in the state.

Farooq Abdullah took it for granted that he or his family was there to rule (sic) forever. His misplaced optimism laced with carelessness and apathy landed him and his party where they should have been long ago. It must be pointed out that had there been fair elections earlier too, the state, in all probability, would have been in a happier scenario.

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The people of Ladakh and Jammu curse their fate for having been "alienated" and reduced to sort of beggars with empty bowls that would get some "alms" once in a while, if Farooq Abdullah was in a good mood.

Although geographically it forms two-thirds of the state's area, Ladakh never got its right of place. The step-motherly treatment given out by Srinagar has kept it among the most backward places in the country. But for the Indian Army, which has been instrumental in Ladakh's development, Ladakh would have been still groping in primitive days. Development and maintenance of roads, airports, etc. that are the wheels of progress, has been done by the armed forces and other Central government agencies. There would be very few places in the country where the local civilians and the Army personnel live in more perfect harmony. No wonder then that despite the cold and inhospitable deserts in most parts of Ladakh, the Army personnel get the "warmth" and support of the local populace.

But now the Mufti factor seems to be giving out some positive signals. It is for the first time that two Ladakhis have been inducted into the state Cabinet. Needless to say, the local leaders and people have started heaving a sigh of relief. They see their hopes and unfulfilled dreams coming true. The most significant step taken by the Mufti government regarding Ladakh is granting full powers to the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council. Its chairman has been given the status of a Cabinet minister and its executive councilors the rank of deputy ministers.

Similarly, the Mufti has promised a hill council for the Kargil district of Ladakh too. Kargil, it may be mentioned, is the Muslim-dominated district of Ladakh and is so backward that the Kargilis could not even think of voicing their rights until a year or two ago. Now the people of Ladakh feel that at last there is someone who listens to them. The steps taken by the Mufti government for the welfare of Ladakh has somewhat boosted the sagging morale of the people.

My observations and interaction with Ladakhi leaders compel me to point out that the Mufti has all the good intentions to deliver his promises and "take along" all the regions of the state. He is a grass-root man unlike Farooq Abdullah who flew for comfort across the seven seas on the slightest pretext even when the state was burning. Even though Dr Abdullah happens to be a doctor by training, he did not or failed to feel the pain of the people, much in contrast to the way the Mufti has taken.

The Mufti has done a good beginning. What should be done now is that he should keep himself steady on the path he has taken. His simplicity and sincerity could be his greatest hallmarks in helping him put the state back on the right track. I, on behalf of the poor but peace-loving people of Ladakh, wish him all the best in taking the state out of the quagmire of ignorance, poverty and terrorism.

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LALA MULK RAJ SARAF – THE MAN I KNEW

by

M.M. Khajooria, Former Director General of Police, known for his courageous approach to deal with difficult situations.

Historically, the state of Jammu and Kashmir is the creation of the Treaty of Amritsar (1846) and the conquests of the Dogra army, which in almost all major campaigns was led by the legendry Dogra General, Zorawar Singh. These conquests extended the Dogra supremacy deep into Baltistan and 'Chotta Tibet'. These areas encompassed multiplicity of tribes, ethnic groups-people who spoke different languages, professed variety of religious beliefs and were the proud inheritors of rich but diverse cultures.

As the era of consolidation set in, the state territory was divided into three regions of Kashmir, Jammu and Frontier Province. These units were geographically compact, cultural homogeneous and linguistically harmonious. It must be said to the credit of the administrators of the day that they did an excellent job considering the daunting complexities of numerically baffling multiplicity of traditions cultures history and languages. This is the composite state in which Lala Mulk Raj Saraf known as the 'Father of Journalism' was born. So was I.

My father, then a Tehsildar in the State service was given a home posting to Jammu when I was a fifth class student. We lived in Kacchi Chawni (The temporary cantonment) at that point of time Maharajah Hari Singh's rule was at its zenith. He enjoyed immense public good will The State was undergoing economic, political and social transformation. The rule of law prevailed and the Maharajah enjoyed the reputation of being just, secular, humane and patriotic. He was heir to, in the words of Arthur Neve "....a Kingdom larger than England, in fact, about equal to Great Britain, with tributary peoples speaking a dozen different languages and dialects, and at a Durbar, in the olden days, one might have not seen only Dogra Princes and Sikh generals, with bold Rajput veterans of the many fiercely contested mountain campaigns, but those who had been subjugated, Tibetan chiefs from Leh and Janskar, Balti Rajahs from Skardo or Shigar, Dard chiefs from Astor or Gilgit, with their picturesque and truculent of followers, all clad in the most diverse

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customes". Some of this grandeur rubbed on us also as Khajurias were traditionally the Raj Gurus of the ruling Jamwal dynasty. More over my uncle, Hakim Dev Raj Baru was the Raj Vaidya (the Royal Physician) which provided a kind of access to the palace.

Those were the days of community living, social homogeneity and generous sharing. The concept of extended family embraced all those living in the Mohalla irrespective of caste creed or religion. There were numerous uncles, aunties brothers, sisters, grand mothers and sisters in law. These relations were not notional. The elders had the right to box your years when you were naughty and they did not hesitate to exercise this right. But mercifully, most of the time they interceded on your behalf when you were caught on the wrong foot by your parents and protected you from the corporal punishment which was quite quick to come.

The Sarafs generally referred to as 'AKHBAR Wallas' lived in our close neighborhood. We were, in fact one family Lala Mulk Raj Saraf was 'Chacha ji' to all us boys. As a rule the boys generally avoided tangalling with men as most of them were stern and unsparing. But Saraf Sahib was an exception. He was kind, considerate surprisingly polite for an uncle. He would always respond to greetings with a faint smile. There was a kind of twinkle in his eyes that radiated affection.

Lalaji was always immaculately dressed in pure 'Khadi'. He exuded a special kind of dignity – a rare blend of pride and humility. Many people came to meet him. The one who attracted most attention and comments was Shiekh Mohd Abdullah, a tall Kashmiri sporting a goatee beard with a shawl wrapped around his middle and shoulders. After one such visit, I heard some people commenting that Lalaji was hob knobbing with the 'Gaddar' Shiekh Abdullah, an enemy of the Dogras. I could not countenance such foul allegation against a man whom I respected immensely but did not know what to do. A couple of days later I walked into his room when he was alone, paid my respects and lingered on a little. He responded with his usual smile and was quick to note my hesitation to withdraw. "What is on your mind son?" he inquired. "Nothing "I replied, but did not move. "Come here", he said affectionately. I moved upto his chair," Now "he asked let us talk about what is worrying you" I kept quite while he kept on staring at me with the special twinkle. As if hypnotized I blurted out all that I had heard.And asked "Chach ji, why do these people say such bad things about you" The smile widened and he said almost in a whisper "They are ignorant people. Don't mind them." And added "I am a Dogra, you are a Dogra none of us is the ruler. I am an 'Akhwar Wallah', your father is a government servant Shiekh Abdullah has no quarrel with us. He is not against the Maharajah Bhadur either. There are other things you are too young to understand. So go play" he patted me on the back and sent me away. This was my first lesson in politics the distinction between the Dogra ruling dynasty and the Dogra people. Years later the great Dogri poet Dinu Bhai Pant, whom I had the privilege to know quite intimately, said all this in his famous

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poem "Lok Meenay Marda Aey Dograin Da Raj O, Dograin Gi eithay Na Kam Tay Na Kaj O" (People hurl taunts that the Dogras are ruling. In reality the Dogras do not have access to even the meanest vocation).

Once I asked Lala ji the secret of his good health. He was then past eighty five. Pat came the reply "Positive thinking, long walks, drinking lots of water and above all spreading the message of live". Thinking of Lalaji reminds of the urdu couplet.

"Es Lafz Muhabat Ka Etna Hi Fasahna Hai
Simtay To Dil-I-Asiq, Failay to Zamana Hai"

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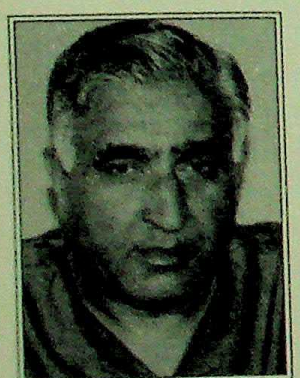
PLEASANT MEMORY OF LALA MULK RAJ SARAF

by



Sheikh Ghulam Rasool, former Chief Secretary, J&K.

The State of Jammu and Kashmir has the unique distinction of its diversity of religious, cultural, regional and topographical nature which inspite of occasional vibrations and fissures has stood head high in the turbulent ocean of the History of the Subcontinent. It as at times amazing to witness the diversity even within each region while basic human ethos prevails all through. The long subjugation by rulers of all hues and colour have not changed the basic character of the people who treated autocratic rulers as oppressors irrespective of their religion or region. The spirit of endurance and patience has not only strengthened the basic character of the people but also modeled them into unbreakable entity. It is not surprising that during the worst of times in its history, the State has witness the emergence of men of valour and talent. Time is always on the move and the wheels of history witness the engines of change.

The history of world is replete with messengers, saints and the like whom Almighty sends to put on tract the humanity particularly when peoples' sufferings reach a high pitch. Our State has witnessed emergence of leaders in various walks of life – literature, art, poetry, politics, journalism, etc. who worked as cementing force for all sections of the society and thus the State survived as a shining example of secularism in the midst of all round communal frenzy.

Lala Mulk Raj Saraf appeared on the glaxy of the State Sky as a shining star. People generally remember him a doyen of journalism which he nourished and nursed with his unflinching commitment and life long sustained efforts with the result that he became a torch bearer of the aspirations of the people irrespective of their religion and region. His total unwavering commitment to secularism and humanity endeared him to all sections of the society. His intrinsic qualities of head and heart coupled with his ever smiling face in unchanging dress – Gandhi cap, Sherwani and Chouridar pajama – made him a distinctive

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personality hardly to be missed even in huge crowds. Not only his person but his family have become a household name in the State.

I had good fortune to meet him often in various capacities of my public service. I recall vividly when after interacting with me in my office as Home secretary in 1977, while parting he uttered, 'Sheikh Sahib, what next?' I couldn't catch the tenor of his words whereupon he said, 'you are moving fast in your position, so what next? Surprising I moved to Industries Department only after three months. Thereafter whenever he would meet me, he would repeat 'what next' and I would only smile.

The memory of Lalaji brings fore the sweet and pleasant time I spent with late D.N. Saraf who has equally chartered his position as an eminent public servant not only in the State but created an enviable name at the National and International level.

Lalaji's personality can be aptly described in the following couplet.

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LALA MULK RAJ SARAF: SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS ROLE

by

O.N. Dhar, former Secretary of the J&K Govt. and a journalist with varied experience.

The history of Jammu and Kashmir is veritably a story of invasions by alien marauders,of treachery and chicanery from within and of a people seething with anger and rage but to docile to assert themselves or even to speak up loudly for their inherent rights. Late Mulk Raj Saraf's role in the history of Jammu and Kashmir has to be viewed in this context.The launching of Ranbir when newspapers were unknown in the State may have been a small step from him but its significance in the larger contour was tremendous:it represented not only the dawn of a new spirit but the charting of an untrodden path with a potential to change the courst of history of a voiceless mass of humanity.

"Ranbir", as it started on a long, historical career, was no revolutionary views paper. Its beginning was a feeble, readership negligible. But "Ranbir" in itself constituted a major new element in the State's body-politic. Saraf sahib, wittingly or unwittingly, had blazed a new trail, shown a new path to the people of the State, a path which in course of time quite a few stalwarts followed both in Jammu as well as across Banihal in the Valley with telling effect. I am inclined to believe that Saraf Shib throughout his long innings was blissfully unaware of the role he had played in setting the J&K State on the path to freedom and democracy. Astute and sharp-sighted though he was, Lalaji was to my mind, singularly innocent.He never threw his weight about or sought to proect himself in any manner, journalistically, politically or journalistically-commercially as became the trend in our post-independence era. I first met Saraf Sahib when I was a bumbling new reporter for the daily "Khidmat" of Kashmir (official organ of the J&K National Conference) with no experience in journalism to my credit.I was hardly 17 and when the late Pt Radha Krishen Kak of The Statesman (a veteran journalist of the time) introduced me to him I felt overwhelmed.But the doyen of J&K's journalism was so gentle, soft and affectionate that I instantly came to like him.His words to me—— which I recall vividly to this day—— were: "Omkarji, you have just started on a new career and are doing well.Reporting

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for a newspaper is a great honour.Be honest, bold and truthful always.If you do so, you will be a good and successful journalist." As it happened, many and varied positions came my way thereafter in the field of journalism and subsequently in the Government. I became an Assistant Editor in the English "Khidmat" and latterly an Editor in th "Kashmir Post" (the very English weekly from Jammu started by that veteran of English journalism in J&K State— the late J N Zutshi who later rose to become the first Director General of Information and Broadcasting of post independence J&K State) as also the J&K corresponent of many reputed national newspapers including The Free Press Journal of Bombay and the Daily Pratap of Delhi. In the State Government I rose from the post of an Information Assistant to the position of a Secretary to the Government.Lalaji's advice guided me always. Whenever we met during his life-time I would mention the fact to him proudly.He would just give a disarming smile. My finest moment came when one day at a farewell gathering held at Srinagar to mark my transfer from the Information Department, Saraf Sahib made a moving remark : "Journalists, officials and other come and go, to be forgotten or remembered for what they do, Dharji is one of the few who will be remembered for his courage and forthrightness.There were times when I felt annoyed with him for saying 'no' to what I believed was fair enought but I must say that more often than not he was right and I was wrong. The remarks speak louder than any tribute paid to him of the character, inherent honesty, courage and goodness of Lala Mulk Raj Saraf. How many people are there today in politis, Government, the media and elsewhere who prepared to admit that they have been wrong at times.

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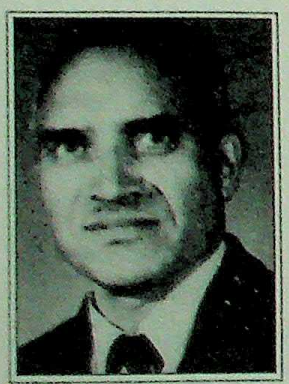
A BEACON OF LIGHT

by



G. D. Sharma

Lala Mulk Raj Saraf was a legend in his lifetime holding aloft the noblest of traditions in journalism. He laid the foundation of the Fourth Estate in Jammu and Kashmir in 1924 and dominated the scene for several decades as a tower of strength for the community of journalists who always found in him a true friend, philosopher and guide. It earned him the popular title of 'Baba-e-Sahafat' (father of Journalism). He presided over the 3-day J&K Newspaper Editors' Conference held in Srinagar in 1943, and was amongst the leading lights who later founded the Indian Federation of Working Journalists (IFWJ) and subsequently joined the stalwarts of the media world to set up the International Organisation of Journalists (IOJ). For his long and distinguished services in the cause of journalism, he was awarded 'Padma Shri' in 1976. But what he himself considered to be his real recognition came to him when his own fraternity honoured him as their Eldest Veteran at a national conference of the IFWJ at Cuttack (Orissa) in 1986. He was also an eminent author and his last monumental work was 530-page "J&K Year Book & Who's Who 1987". He was busy bringing up-to-date his autobiography '50 years as a Journalist' (originally published in 1967) when he suddenly passed away in Bombay on February 21, 1989, aged 95 still representing the Hindu' (Madras) and 'Mirror' (London). He had extensively toured Europe, the U.S.S.R., China and Korea besides the U.S.A. where he was for more than a month at the age of 91.

Born on April 8, 1984, in village Samba of Jammu District in a middle class family, he was thrown in a mire of adversity as his parents and three brothers died in an epidemic around the turn of this century. He could go to the local school only when he was eleven plus. Graduating from the Prince of Wales (now the Government Gandhi Memorial) College, Jammu, in 1919, he joined the Law

The author, a popular free-lance journalist, rose from the ranks to head the Information Administration in J&K, retiring in 1971 after more than 30 years' meritorious service.

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College, Lahore, when unprecedented awakening was sweeping the country, triggered off by the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. The twin cities of Lahore and Amritsar were then humming with activity, attracting top leaders of the nation. Jawahar Lal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose were not so well-known at that time. The young Saraf then resolved to respond to Gandhiji's call for a boycott of Government Colleges in order to dedicate himself to the struggle for national emancipation. His action plan was soon launched when an unexpected opportunity came his way to get associated with Lala Lajpat Rai, the 'Lion of Punjab' as a sub-editor of famed daily 'Bande Matram' which he had just started after his return from exile in America. He thus had his initiation at the feet of a colossus amongst the galaxy of journalists whom the nation was to honour soon as 'Rashtrapati' as the Congress President was then used to be called.

So superbly blessed the youthful Dogra enthusiast made good use of his tremendous self-confidence and crusading zeal to quickly pick up the ABC of journalism. He then began asking himself: why not bring out a newspaper from his home-state and kindle the flame of nationalism in what was known as Princely India which had been excluded from the Congress ambit? The time arrived finally when he left Lahore by the close of the year 1920 to settle in Jammu to pursue his cherished goal. Easier said than done, it turned out to be a Herculean task – a hard struggle for more than three years which a visionary and missionary like him alone could sustain to persuade Maharaja Pratap Singh to grant permission to publish the 'Ranbir'. The fascinating saga has been vividly documented in his autobiography, which also spotlights many battles he waged and won as a fearless and truthful recorder of events. For him no sacrifice was too great to follow his 5-word Bible that "facts are sacred, comment free". Even those who happened to disagree with his views at times, would scarcely challenge him on the veracity of facts. He had to face trials and tribulations including confinement, banishment, security demands and even closures of the 'Ranbir' in 1930 and 1947 for his nationalistic views and objective reporting which though admittedly in public interest were hard to digest by those motivated by other considerations. I will never forget the day when I was officially deputed to convey to him personally the import of the written orders by the then Prime Minister, Mr. R.C. Kak, to "starve Mr. Saraf to submission". "Let Mr. Kak try his utmost". I was told categorically. And Mr. Kak did his worst but had to leave the stage soon ignominiously. Twenty-seven years late I was privileged as Secretary of a distinguished Citizens Committee to honour him on his 80th birthday at a grand public reception chaired by the then Chief Minister, Syed Mir Qasim.

As a freedom fighter, his attachment with the Indian National Congress was natural. It dated back to its Amritsar Session in December 1919 where he met a number of leaders in the vanguard of freedom movement. He later took a prominent part in organizing the All India States' Peoples'

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Conference in 1926 at Kanpur where the Congress had then held its annual session under the presidentship of that 'Bulbule-e-Hind' (Nightingale of India) Sarojini Naidu. He was amongst the demonstrators against the Simon Reforms commission in Lahore in October 1928 when his mentor Lala Lajpat Rai received his share of lethal blows, to which he succumbed in 18 days. He also participated in the Lahore Session of the Congress in 1929 when it pledged itself to the attainment of complete independence. In1985 the nonagenarian Saraf attended the Congress Centenary celebrations in Bombay as a special invitee with Rajiv Gandhi presiding.

Within Jammu and Kashmir, Lala Mulk Raj Saraf was a leading figure in the Dogra Sabha which was the only popular party in the State in 1920s. He was instrumental in extending its activities to the Kashmir Valley. It may surprise many to know today that a 3-day session of the Dogra Sabha was held in Srinagar in October 1926 when sheikh Abdullah was not in the picture. The session was preceded by a huge procession – the first of its kind in the Valley, which had taken seven hours to pass through the interior of Srinagar. In 1930 Maharaja Hari Singh had banned both the 'Ranbir' and the Dogra Sabha for their pro-Congress leanings. The vacuum in the public life was then filled by the emergence of Sheikh Abdullah and Muslim Conference on the scene. Lala Mulk Raj Saraf's handsome contribution in secularizing the body politic of the State is too well known. The Jammu unit of the National Conference was itself set up at a meeting held in the office of the 'Ranbir' in 1940. But his intimate political connections were always sub-servient to broad national interests and certainly never exceeded the limit where his freedom as an unbiased and impartial pressman might be compromised in any manner.

Lala Mulk Raj Saraf was even greater as a man – a fine specimen of dignity, integrity and humility, given to simple living andnoble thinking.God-fearing, he will instinctively identify himself with the voice-less and the under-privileged – as if fighting his own bad old days as an unlettered boy in rags. He had also a remarkable knack to discover talent and unassumingly encourage it to attain excellence. It was how the Jamna Devi Gian Devi Saraf Trust named after his mother and wife to alleviate human suffering as well as to help growth of a healthy press, was born. He even made a donation of his most precious possession to the University of Jammu for research in the form of all the files of 'Ranbir' and the 'Rattan' – India's foremost Urdu journal for children, which he founded in 1934 and continued till partition. He got himself enrolled as a Life Member of the Indian Red Cross on his 91st birthday. With no sister by birth, he adopted a Harijan lady as one. Whenever queried about the secret of his tireless activity of mind and body, his answer was "His Grace". His grace indeed it was that made the khadi-wearer teetotaler, a true Karma Yogi, standing erect and walking straight – as straight as his malice-free and action-oriented daily routine at peace with himself and his Creator. Small wonder, he proved a social reformer par excellence. Be it unsociability, forced

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labour, trafficking in women, infanticide, child wedlocks, juvenile smoking or other evils, he will be in the forefront of struggle to root them out. Important social administrative and constitutional reforms introduced in J&K before and after independence were in no mean degree due to the sustained efforts put in by the 'Father of Journalism' in educating and mobilizing public opinion on those lines.

Like all great men, Lala Mulk Raj Saraf too had a devoted woman behind him. It was his wife, Shrimati Gian Devi. About her he wrote in 1967. "Like most journalists and public men, I have also had my share of suffering but how much of it – physical, mental and financial, that saintly woman, my partner in life, has undergone because of me, would never be known. Without her, I would not have been what I am today". At 75 she predeceased him on January 22, 1979, after a life-partnership of 59 years.

That was Lala Mulk Raj Saraf – a shining star on the national horizon. Such people never die.

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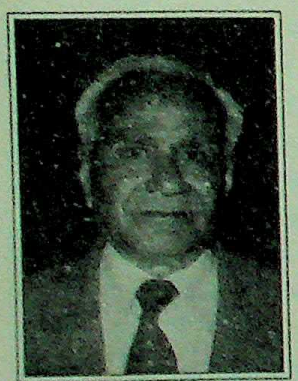
FOOT PRINTS ON THE SANDS OF TIME

by



Prof. Dushiant Rampal, co-Head, English Deptt. and Director, Centre for New Literature, University of Jammu

Lala Mulk Raj Saraf (1894-1989), like a colossus straddled two different worlds. He was like a rainbow which has firm feet on our horizon but looks into a new one beyond our ken. He was the strongest catalytic agent among the forces that have changed a medieval, autocratic society into a modern, democratic one in Jammu and Kashmir. His achievement is so massive that the mind staggers in the full apprehension of its realization. Some people have described him as the pioneer of journalism in Jammu & Kashmir. This is good so far as it goes, but it does not go far enough and is, therefore, like many such formulations, an incomplete fragmentary vision of this many-sided Protean personality.

Born into a fairly well known family of jewelers passing through a comparative period of straitened circumstances, Lala Mulk Raj Saraf, as a young man managed to reach Prince of Wales College for his graduation, when graduates were rare. At a time when young people are dreaming of making their fortunates, it is characteristic that when his Professor of History, Sh. T.L. Magarmilani, questioned him about his programme in life, he expressed his dream of seeing four things in the State, viz a newspaper, a legislative assembly, a university and a bank. Perhaps unwittingly the young man had laid down the blue-print of the evolution of modernist state from a feudal despotic one. But the miracle is that he in his own life achieved the realization of his vision.

Why it is unsatisfactory to call him merely a pioneer is that a pioneer involves the idea of incomplete achievement. Lala Mulk Raj Saraf is, more than our predecessor, our contemporary; and a leader in the various roles which he performed. Starting a newspaper at a time when even to talk about it would have been considered sheer nonsense, if not also a seditious agenda, Lala Mulk Raj Saraf became the editor of the first newspaper in the State appropriately named **Ranbir**, a champion in the field. As a newsman Lala Saheb set standards which any journalist of today should be proud of. He resisted all pressures, whether they came from Mr Glancey or Mr Wakefield, the Ministers and Secretaries of the autocratic reigns or from the

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Inspector Generals of Police under the orders of the Chief Ministers or Prime Ministers in the democratic regimes. It is a mark of his integrity that he allowed the **Ranbir** to be banned in the region of Maharaja Hari Singh and to finally close the paper in 1950 under a democratic Government rather than bowing to its pressures. The story is too well known to be repeated.

Likewise as a public man Lala Mulk Raj Saraf set the highest standards of secularism, democratic spirit and moderation, even when those whom he had helped to reach the seats of power deserted these ideals. With firm faith in the cause of patriotism, he never allowed himself to be a breast thumping chauvinist. Though he risked his personal liberty and the closure of his newspaper in the cause of the State's accession to India, he advocated the policy of amity and brotherhood with Pakistan. In this connection his reportage of his journey to Pakistan is like a breath of fresh air in an atmosphere of hate and narrow gingoism.

Lala Mulk Raj Saraf was all these things because he was a great man. With the elemental rustic simplicity of a bygone age, he blended the best of the traditional values and modern ethos. On the one hand he was humble, so that as a young student he carried a maund of vegetables on his head from Jammu to Samba on foot to oblige his teachers. On the other hand he could hold his head high before the highest in both the feudal as well as democratic age. Such people in our culture are the bearers of 'maryada' (tradition). It is an honour to pay a tribute to him.

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MULK RAJ SARAF: AN INDEFATIGABLE FIGHTER

by

Safuddin Soz, M.P. (Rajya Sabha) and a former Union Minister.

The observance of 109th birth anniversary of Late Lala Mulk Raj Saraf, to me appears to be an appropriate occasion, not only to remember this great man of journalism, but also as an opportunity to assess our own role in shaping various developments in the State, for the sacrifices and struggles of late Saraf Sahib were closely interlinked with momentous events in Jammu and Kashmir. Besides being a veteran journalist, who has had the distinction of pioneering the growth of print media in the State, Saraf Sahib has been a freedom fighter, a social activist and a missionary for the cause of under-privileged. From his days as a sub-editor of the famed nationalist newspaper "Bande Matram" under Lal Lajpat Rai to the time in 1924, when he started and edited the first newspaper in Jammu and Kashmir under the name "Ranbir", Lalaji surmounted one obstacle after another. Being undaunted in this mission, the paper had its share of trouble when its publication was banned in 1930 because of the allegedly "subversive" propaganda in connection with Gandhiji's arrest at that time.

Later, however, "Ranbir" re-appeared in 1931 when the freedom movement in the country was gathering strength. Again, "Ranbir" was banned in June 1947.

It re-appeared three months later and mobilized public resistance against Pakistani aggression on the State. Late Saraf has been active in shaping various social, economic, political and journalistic movements. There was hardly any aspect of life in the State where Lalaji has not made a deep impact and left his indelible mark. For these very qualities he was decorated with Padma Shri in 1976. He continued to be very active and agile till well past ninety.

He has published dozens of books throwing light on diverse facts of life of the State. The numerous volumes of "J&K Year Book" and "who's who" would always remain a source of rich reference to searchers and historians.

I had the privilege of not only knowing Lalaji very closely but enjoying longish conversations and exchange of ideas. Strangely enough my acquaintance with Lalaji shaped through his illustrious son, Shri Om Saraf whose struggle against parochial elements in the J&K State is well-known all over.

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A TRIBUTE

"Heights by greatmen reached and kept, were not attained by sudden flight. While their companions slept, they were toiling upward in the night." This adage fits here well as for the personality of Shri Mulk Raj Saraf is concerned. The flame – he lighted, the path – he showed and the high ideals – he cherished – all are being carried out by all the members of his family, in the right perspective. This is the right and well-meaning tribute they are paying great soul.

Nature had bestowed, rightly so, on most revered Saraf Sahib all the good qualities of head and heart – including benevolent and dedicated concern, sincere and serious devotion, positive and down to earth approach, accommodating and obliging nature, tenacious and relentless determination, rational and clear vision, philanthropic and generous gesticulation, motivational and inspiring writing and above all courage of conviction and to call a spade and spade.

Lala Mulk Raj Saraf was born at Samba (District Jammu) on April 1894. He lost his parents and two brothers in an epidemic plague which hit Samba badly when he was five with the result that he could start schooling very late when he was eleven. He had a brilliant academic record through out being a hard working student. He did his B.A. from Prince of Wales College, Jammu (now Govt. Gandhi Memorial College). After completing his degree course in Arts, he joined Law Classes at Lahore (now in Pakistan) and simultaneously started working under Sher-i-Punjab Lala Lajpat Rai in his news newspaper "Bandey Matrim". It was here that he felt inspired by Lala ji to think of starting his own newspaper in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The credit goes to his sharp focus, imagination and conviction that whatever dream he dreamt, he realised it by putting in his vigorous, consistent and hard labour. An attempt to bring out a newspaper in the Jammu & Kashmir State was then considered by the power that be as an hostile act against the state. But, admittedly, those who want to re-build the social structure or to enlighten the human society with a new endeavor, thought or ideology, try to be practical, realistic, unfaltering and un-daunted. Similarly, Sh. Saraf a man of vision, courage and firmness of

by

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purpose took an initiative in the same manner at the age of 32 and preferred an application dated March, 1921 to his Highness Maharaja Pratap Singh for permission to start a newspaper and to set up a printing press for the purpose. Since this was the first application of its own type, it created a stir and a confusion in the Darbar Hierarchy. The application was out rightly rejected. A second application was made. That, too, was rejected. While rejecting the third application, the tone of the rejection letter was some-what mild. Without feeling disheartened and discouraged, Mr. Saraf preferred fourth application on which many notes and opinions were exchanged among the State officers and the ruler. Ultimately, the State Council granted permission which, infact, was in the form of a letter No. 12488 dated March, 28, 1924 full of many hard conditions. It was the outcome of three years continuous and progressive struggle and toil. However, numerous friends conveyed their felicitations to Sh. Saraf and expressed their joy for he having obtained the permission to start a newspaper. Just as the advent of crimson dawn in inevitable at the end of cimmerian darkness of inter-luner night, exactly in the same way the efforts of Sh. Saraf bore fruit which further gave birth to financial and allied surmountable problems. Saraf Sahib being an incorrigible optimist, became successful to manage the requisite finances with the help of his well-wisher Mr. Vishwa Nath Wadehra who helped him in borrowing Rs. 2000/- from Wazir Tej Ram. He set up an office in a mud house situated at Kachi Chawni, Jammu and a hand litho printing press was purchased and installed.

Saraf Sahib, before bringing out the newspaper, printed a life size poster in Urdu. It said, "True interpreter of the national sentiments, the weekly 'Ranbir' in Urdu will soon come up from the Rajdhani Jammu with solemn dignity. Mr. Mulk Raj Saraf B.A., qualified, well-meaning and experienced youngman will be its first editor, printer and publisher. However, for the information of the public it would be proper to say that the policy of the 'Ranbir' will be similar to that of a national newspapers. The subscription rates of the Ranbir will be Rs. 4/- for a year and Rs. two and a half for six months. Every issue will be priced at one anna and a half (equal to 10 Paisa of today)."

As soon as the poster was published and received by the Public they began to manifest practical proof of their deep interest in the paper. The interest among the people to have their own first newspaper was so intense that they vied with one another by sending subscription before the actual appearance of the paper. Most encouraging, inspirited and unique feature was that His Highness Sir Pratap Singh felt elated and donated Rupees 100/- annually for this pioneer enterprise. Raja Hari Singh also did not lag behind in this noble cause and started donating Rs. 50/- annually. This, of course, reflected the presence of sufficient social urge and awakening among the people and the ruler of the state alike who were very keen to have some forum to project their views.

It is also interesting to note that before the actual appearance of the 'Ranbir'. A dummy edition was published on May 20, 1924. The leading article of the dummy was captioned "Righteousness"

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Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

interalia, this article highlighted the significance of the word "Ranbir". Its lexical meaning was "Knight of the battlefield." Rana meant the battle field and the Vir signified puissant vanquisher by nature. The word Napoleon in French means the same thing as the "Ranbir" in Urdu/Hindi. The dummy edition carried an other important item – an address by the Governor general of India, Lord Chelmsford which he had delivered in Jammu in 1921 on the occasion of the restoration of full powers to Maharaja Pratap Singh. Also, a letter from one of the well-wisher, Moulvi Moh'd Zain-ud-Abdin Kohi Samahanviwas published in which he asked the Maharaja of the State, "If your Highness is really interested to know about the miserable conditions under which the people of the State live, please do not enquire from the Zaildars who like quacks are themselves mostly responsible for the ills of the people. These Zaildars are, at best, the spokesmen of the government but they cannot rightly represent the down-trodden people. If your highness wants to be acquainted with the true state of affairs concerning the people, read, what appears in the columns of the "Ranbir" which represents the voice of the people in true sense."

After having made so many arrangements, Mr. Saraf an embodiment of empathy, serenity, tranuquality, dedication and courage of conviction, was able to bring out the newspaper the "Ranbir" on June 24, 1924 as a first regular issue. It was received by the general public with great interest and enthusiasm. It was a 12 page issue and contained articles of people like Lala Hans Raj Vakil, Sardar Budh Singh, Pandit Har Krishan Lal Habib, Syd-Zn-ul-Fikar Ali Nasim Razvi and of Dr. Barkat Ram who sent his article from London. There was an other writer as 'A Lazy Nationalist." His real name was Lala Bal Mukund, Accountant General of State. He was a great intellectual and a patriot. He said, "Today is, Undoubtedly, a red-letter day in the History of Jammu & Kashmir State. It signifies the focus on the policies, culture, Social activities and Welfare of the State."

It may be worth while to mention few names who remained closely associated with the Ranbir in different capacities. They were Pandit Jia Lal Kilam Advocate, Pandit Salig Ram Kaul Vakil, Moulvi Mohd. Abdullah Vakil, Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, Pandit Kayshap Bandhu, Pandit Prem Dass Pardesi, Pandit B.P. Sharma, Mehta Nand Lal, Lala Prahlad Bhat vakil, Chowdhary Gian Chand Sadarbati, Lala Rohlu Ram, Chowdhary Mohd's Shafi, Mahasha Ram Chand gupta, Lala Nathu Ram Vakil, Chowdhary Mohan Lal Motial, Master Hans Raj Jandial, Khwaja ghulam Qadir Bandey, Shri Dina Kapoor; etc.

Other important persons who wrote freely for the paper, wer S/Shri Vishwa Nath Kerni, Girdhari Lal Anand, Dr. S.S. Nishat, Lala Bansi Lal Suri, Krishan Smailpuri, Qais Shervani, Manohar Lal Dil, Mirza Mubark Beg, Master Zinda Koul, Sahibzada Mohd Umar, Lala Hans Raj Vaikl, Sardar Budh Singh, Pandit Anant Ram Dogra, Pandit Lok Nath Sharma, Pandit Pindi Dass, Raizada Lakhmi Chand, Pandit V.P. Fida, Kaviraj Guru Dutt Vaid Sharma; etc. All these luminaries, in their later stage, earned named and fame in their respective fields for their Uranic and Firma-mental qualities and also for their dynasim,

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dillgence, dedication, intelligence and scholarly bent of mind. The credit, for motivating and inspiring all above said intellectuals to become budding Journalists and writers, goes to Shri Mulk Raj Saraf.

The campaign which the 'Ranbir' persistently and honestly carried on was against the trafficking in women, sale of Charas and other Social evils like suppression of infanticide, abolition of untouchability and forced/bonded labour. Reporting of legal Court cases and police activities in true colour earned for the Ranbir the title of a social reformer. This resulted for the anactment of various measures initiated during the regime of Maharaja Hari Singh specially in the Social reforms including the establishment of the Legislative Assembly, banks and University.

Some excerpts of the first issue are worth mentioning. It said, "A news era is dawning upon the world and every nation and country is striving for progress. In some countries Kingship holds sway while at other places freedom struggle is being relentlessly pursued, if in some places commerce is thriving on other places capitalist and labourers are at loggerheads. Some places are even now steeped in darkness while others are seeing the struggle for social emancipation. If unity is the separate franchise, it is confronting in other areas. In short, every place is inferment. Every where political, economic and social forces are pushing a head and pulsating with new life. It is impossible that Jammu & Kashmir State, somnolent for a long time, should remain in affected and the people in the state are not infused with the vigorous idea of marching forward. It is the symbol of awakening.

"That is the pious objective that brings the 'Ranbir' into the battlefield. Though it seems that the RANBIR is surrounded on all sides by thorny hedges, yet its own path is quite clear and straight; its motive force is duty, truth and dare. It is far away from bias, hatred and under hand means, hence fully convinced of its success.

"Advantage of Unity are myriad. It is, therefore, imperative that rights of every citizen, without caring for whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim or whether he is a Kashmiri or a Dogra, should be fully and equally respected and guarded.

"We stand for free primary education through out the state. Arrangement should be made for adequate industrial training. The RANBIR will, particularly, highlight the problems of social justice."

The concluding lines of the editorial said, "in the progress of the people of the state lies the secret of the progress of the rest of India because this state is the head and the rest of India, the body."

Shri Mulk Raj Saraf Worked fearlessly and indefatigably for the freedom of the Press till his death at the age of 95 (Feb 21, 1989); he remained a shinning living example of the highest standard of his profession and moral principles. The following saying rightly manifests his personality:

"Nothing will take the place of persistence. Talent will not: nothing is more common than unsuccessful people with talent. Genius will not: Un-rewarded genius is a proverb. Education will not: The world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."

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Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

He lived a successful, honest and value oriented life for having all the qualities that make a person triumphant and thriving in his life – including – desire, commitment, conviction, responsibility, hard-work, character, positive believing, giving more than one gets, the power of persistence, and pride of performance. Never once did he succumb to any temptation and invariably fought against heavy odds to lend meaning and dignity to Journalism in Jammu and Kashmir state. Above all his writings will attain distilled distinction like Bhagvat Gita amidst the Journalists to come. He was awarded Padam Shree in 1976.

This is how a strong foundation of the Fourth Estate was laid in the J&K State which is growing and expanding continuously under well known men of letters, Journalists, writers, artists and publishers including the third generation of the 'father of Journalism' in J&K State.

The befitting and appropriate tribute to this great soul will be if we shoulder the responsibility of linking the past with the future, become strong in the determination that when burden is laid down the path a greater progress shall be plain to those who follow.

In our generation of tomorrow who in the days to come will pledge themselves eagerly to the ideals he set for us towards which we of today are only tentatively reaching the full scope and glory of which is as yet dim to our vision.

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BUILDING CONSENSUS: INFORMED JOURNALISM AND HERITAGE PRESERVATION

> *"Shri Mulk Raj Saraf has arrived at an honoured position in the contemporary life of Jammu and Kashmir through five decades of endeavour in promoting and fostering the urges of his people and to find the their identity and its broader relationship with the national personality."*
>
> *— Shri Bhagwan Sahay, J&K Governor*

by

Aparna Tandon, Art Conservator, Amar Mahal Museum, Jammu

As a heritage preservation specialist, I am dedicating the following essay to the memory of a truly informed journalist whose great writings aimed at establishing the cultural identity of the people of Jammu and Kashmir are extremely relevant today for engaging the communities in J&K in a constructive dialogue for preservation of their cultural heritage.

This essay is based on the assumptions that heritage preservation is essentially a social activity and that for sustainable preservation and management problems public participation is necessary. However, a heritage disjoined from the every day lives of people cannot enlist popular support.

Even though in the recent years, general awareness for the need to preserve the cultural heritage of India as a 'Nation' has grown. Yet, glaring examples of neglect and destruction of cultural property can be seen all over. Despite its 'developing' status, India has advanced to a stage where responsibility for conservation of its cultural heritage lies squarely with its government and its people. However, to fulfill this 'shared' responsibility effectively the paradigms for cultural heritage need to be made more responsive to the social landscape of today's India.

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The major problems with most efforts to preserve an disseminate cultural heritage in India seem to emanate from a failure to understand fully the cultural significance of heritage and to appreciate its value to the local communities.

In the post-independence India, museums, archieves, libraries etc. were set up to show case the glorious past of India in which all religions, races communities and tribes were to be represented as part of one nation and one diverse culture. This liberal ideology of heritage could never become inclusive and pluralistic in practice. Consequently, the minorities and the marginal communities could never fully identify with the 'national' heritage, narrowing its scope to the dominant culture.

Liberalization of the economy in 1990's brought foreign investment, greater social mobility and widening income disparities. The inability of the domestic economy to provide job has resulted in massive migration from rural areas into the cities. Thus, creating an underclass that is alienated from its cultural roots. Their unique settlements stand abandoned and empty.

The industrialization has contributed to slow but sure disappearance of many of the hand crafted wares. People have abandons materials that otherwise blended well with their environments in favor of materials that are convenient and easy to use in their every day life. The growing urban middle class of India, which is more conservative, is struggling to understand these forces of transition disrupting their lives. Their resistance to change has led to the formation of associations based on common ethnicity or religion as defense mechanisms.

The social changes in the postmodern India to some extent are irreversible. The compounded effect of migrations, transitions and widening income disparities has compelled the communities to search for their socio-religious identities.

An example of this phenomenon can be seen in the State of J&K. The demographic make up of the state showcases the diversity in the society where Muslims have a dominant culture further divided by various sub cultures namely, Gujjar (nomads), Sufi, Sunni and Shia. Dogra Hindus, divided by castes and sub castes, Jains, Sikhs, Christians and Ladakhi Buddhists with their distinctive cultures add to the complexities of social fabric.

The museums of the state do not fully represent the diverse culture of the state, consequently very few people visit museums. The edifices built by the Dogra rulers are in a state of neglect and disrepair. On the other hand pilgrim tourism in the state is one rise. Bodies like Waqf – religious trust administering Muslim shrines in the state, temple trusts and Buddhist monasteries enjoy support of their respective communities and have political clout as well.

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Media has a definitive role in using these urges to reestablish the links between people and their heritage. Journalists can contribute greatly in creating awareness about tangible and intangible heritage of the state. The need of the hour is to engage religious bodies, which control a significant part of heritage of the state, in a constructive dialogue for channeling community funds towards regular maintenance and wider dissemination of heritage sites under their control.

Journalist in the state should help in highlighting the commonalities in thecultural traditions ofvarious communities and groups. In this way they can help in building consensus between various communities for committing resources to the cause of heritage preservation. This can in-turn help in conflict resolution in a society which has been further divided by the prolonged militancy in the state.

Deriving inspiration from pioneers like Shri Saraf, Journalists can and should promote the collective nature of heritage to resolve the identity crisis brought on by forces of globalization.

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LALA MULK RAJ, 100 YEARS

ARUN SHOURIE DELIVERS MEMORIAL LECTURE

Given his robust health and simple habits, all his admirers had no doubt that Lala Mulk Raj Saraf would live at least 100 happy years. They were, however, to be disappointed by the cruel hands of destiny. Although full of life, vigour and new ideas, Lalaji bid good-bye to all of us at the age of 95. Till his death, his zest for life, concern for human dignity and respect for the freedom of expression was not matched by persons half his age. It was but natural that when his 100 birth anniversary came in 1994, five top young intellectuals, all of them having different ideologies, decided to pay homage to the Father of Journalism in Jammu and Kashmir by organising a memorial lecture on the 'national integration and print media'. The famous five were: Prof Hari Om, Prof D.K. Rampal, Prof O.P. Sharma, Dr Jitendra Singh and (the late) Vaishno Gupta.

There could have not have been a better subject given the turbulent situation in the State at that time. And who else, the five main organisers felt, could speak on such an important subject on such an important occasion for J&K but Mr Arun Shourie, himself a champion of the free Press? Mr Shourie immediately agreed and flew to Jammu on September 23, 1994, a day ahead of the lecture the venue of which was the auditorium in the new campus of the University of Jammu. He was met by Mr Om Prakash Saraf and Mr Suraj Saraf, the eldest members of the Saraf family, on his arrival. The same night there was an impressive dinner hosted by Prof Hari Om at his residence; it was attended, besides the organisers, by many University teachers.

The next morning the entire University campus was humming with activity. The auditorium began overflowing even before the arrival of Mr Shourie. Public enthusiasm had to be seen to be believed. There were tight security arrangements given the overall scenario at that critical juncture in the State. But nobody appeared to mind that. The function was in the memory of one of the builders of democracy in Jammu and Kashmir, and it was for the first time after the outbreak of militancy in 1989 that such a function was being organised anywhere in the State.

Countless messages were received on the occasion including from the then Prime Minister (Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao), Union Home Minister (Mr S.B. Chavan), Minister for Tourism and Civil

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Aviation (Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad), Minister of State for Home (late Rajesh Pilot) and Mr Ashok Gehlot (presently Rajasthan Chief Minister). Prof Hari Om read some of the messages on the occasion while setting the trend for the day's proceedings.

Dr Jitendra Singh dwelt on the life and works of Mr Arun Shourie and pointed out that he was the only editor in the country who had been sacked twice for his courage of conviction.

In a fluent speech, Prof Rampal paid a moving tribute to Lalaji, and recalled his association with his sons, Mr Om Prakash Saraf, Mr Suraj Saraf, Mr Prem Saraf, Mr Ved Rahi and Mr Sat Saraf. He recalled that when Lalaji had visited Pakistan, he had evoked sentimental memories on either side of the Line of Control and international border and had left the common man wondering why there were not many genuine human beings like him around.

When Mr Arun Shourie began to speak, there was pindrop silence. People took out their pens and notebooks. He prefaced his speech with laudatory references to the members of the Saraf family. Apparently referring to his meeting with Mr Om Prakash Saraf and Mr Suraj Saraf, he remarked that 'humility runs in the family'. He said till he came to Jammu he had personally known only Pushp Saraf who was his brother and whose integrity was unquestionable.

Mr Shourie said perhaps a greater person than him could have done justice to the personality of Lalaji. He remarked that the persons like Lalaji, Lala Lajpat Rai and Bal Gangadhar Tilak were rare. He hailed Lalaji's decision to

close down his newspaper, The Ranbir, rather than succumbing to political pressures and blackmail of any kind. He said the decision was in tune with the views of Mahatma Gandhi who had observed that if a newspaper could not do justice to its profession of serving people and society, it would do better to wind up instead of allowing itself to be influenced by extraneous considerations.

Mr Shourie asserted that journalists and, more so, the editors should have a clear vision about their real priorities. They should be responsible towards society and the nation. The preference should be given to highlighting serious issues like, for instance, the plight of refugees living in Jammu instead of sensational reports of baser human instincts.

Mr Shourie bitterly criticised those who ignored the atrocities being committed by terrorists and, who, instead, raised the bogey of human rights violations by security forces and custodial excesses to boost the morale of militants. He regretted that quite a few leading columnists were ignoring national interest. He felt said that such scribes thought of nationalism as a dirty word and, in the process, went to the extent of being more anti-Indian than even their Pakistain counterparts. He wondered how the acts of terrorism could be rationalised.

He said newspapers were not consumer market products and their owners should keep this in mind. He assailed those journalists who had a jaundiced vision and who dubbed nationalists as

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communalists in order to assume self-professed secular credentials. He said the writing on the wall should be clear and Pakistan would not learn if not tackled firmly.

So overwhelming was the response to Mr Shourie's speech that unusual for a memorial lecture it got extended into an unscheduled question-answer session. The questioners included many senior citizens like Peer Giyasuddin, Sardar Teja Singh and Mr Chander Gulati and University teachers and students. It was a stimulating and thought-provoking session with questions and answers touching the country's social and political milieu.

Autograph-hunters would not let Mr Shourie to have a moment's respite. They gathered around him; they got autographs mainly on a beautiful pictorial album of Lala Mulk Raj Saraf specially brought out on the occasion by Vinay Saraf. Some had brief notebooks for the purpose. Mr Shourie flew back to New Delhi from the auditorium itself. He left all impressed with his sincerety and sharp intellect.

Everybody was convinced that never before such a memorial function had been held in which everybody felt involved; it was the unanimous view that the entire function was a fitting tribute to Lala Mulk Raj Saraf who had not only founded the State's first newspaper but had always promoted regional and communal harmony apart from, of course, playing a prominent role in helping the State to have its legislature and first university.

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JAMNA DEVI GIAN DEVI SARAF TRUST

The Jamna Devi Gian Devi Saraf Trust briefly known as JDGD Saraf Trust was established on Agusut 9, 1985, by Lala Mulk Raj Saraf, popularly called 'Father of Journalism' in Jammu and Kashmir, and his eldest son, Mr. Om Prakash Saraf, himself an eminent journalist. They named it after their respective Mothers with the following objects in view:

1. To encourage the growth of a healthy press by providing awards, scholarships and other incentives to journalists in and outside the J&K State:
2. To awards prizes to two best students – one boy and one girl – officially adjudged as the "best all-rounder of the year" passing out from the leading educational institution at Samba, the home-town of founding trustees;
3. To help the destitute and/or people belonging to other weaker sections in dire need of financial assistance; and
4. To perform any other similar act which the trustees may decide.

'SARAF' AWARDS

The first 'Saraf Awards' were given in 1986 to the following for pioneering contribution in their respective fields of journalism:

1. Miss Asha Khosa as woman reporter
2. Mr. B.A. Bashir as cartoonist
3. Mr. Mohd Amin and Mr. Raju Kerni as photo journalist.

In 1988, thirteen J&K veterans credited with "significant contribution to journalism continuously for more than 40 years" were the recipients of the awards. They were:

1. Mr. Balraj Puri
2. Mr. Suraj Saraf
3. Mr. Ved Bhasin
4. Mr. D.C. Parshant
5. Master Roshan Lal

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6. Mr. Raghubir Singh Mukt
7. Mr. Nand Lal Wattal
8. Mr. Aziz Kashmiri
9. Mr. Makhan Lal Mahv
10. Mr. S.P. Sahni
11. Mr. J.N. Sathu
12. Mr. Ghulam Rasul Arif
13. Mr. Mohd Yusuf Qadiri

SENIOR-MOST 'RANBIR' ASSOCIATE

On January 1, 1989, a Special Award was given to Mr. B.P. Sharma in recognition of his "signal contribution to the cause of journalism" on his 80th birthday. In a touching letter from Bombay which, alas, proved to be his last Lala Mulk Raj Saraf wrote to Mr. Sharma: "I vividly remember how more than sixty years ago you started your journalistic career with 'Ranbir' as a student. This makes you the only member of the old 'Ranbir' family of 1920s keeping a very pleasant company with me".

On February 21, 1989, the era which had started more than 70 years earlier, ended with Lala Mulk Raj Saraf's demise in Bombay after a brief illness. The vacancy was filled by the surviving trustee who then appointed Mrs. Rachna Vinod as the second Trustee on March 24, 1989, in terms of the relevant provision of the Trust Deed.

DECORATED FOR DISTINCTION

'Lala Mulk Raj Saraf Awards' as the same were designated after the passing away of the 'Father of Journalism' were given in 1989 to the following dignitaries for laudable contribution over the years:

1. Maulana Mohd Saeed Masoodi (aged 87), well known freedom fighter and parliamentarian, for his significant contribution as a journalist which greatly contributed to popular awakening in Kashmir in its early phase;
2. Prof. Ram Nath Shastri (aged 75), the father-figure on Dogri renaissance, for ably and painstakingly editing the Dogri quarterly journal 'Nami Chetna' for more than 21 years;
3. Prof. Kundal Lal (aged 68), the famed educationist and author, for his outstanding contribution as Editor of the 'Rattan' Jammu, reputation of which as Children's foremost Urdu Journal before partition remains unsurpassed;

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4. Mr. G.D. Sharma (aged 73), who after retirement as Director of Information J&K, took up freelance journalism and set up a fairly high standard as an impartial fearless columnist;
5. Mr. Onkar Nath Koul (aged 53) for his noteworthy contribution as an economic journalist in the State;
6. Malik Mohd. Sayeed (aged 55) for his role in organizing resistance against J&K Special Powers (Press Bill 1989) which the State Government later withdrew in the wake of the recommendation by the Press Council of India;
7. Mirza Ghulam Hassan Arif Beg (aged 79), an eminent poet and linguist, for his pioneering work in the development of journalism in Kashmiri language through 'Kong Posh' early in 1950s and 'Gulrez' in 1960s;
8. Mr. Ghulam Nabi 'Khayal' (aged 52) with several literary publications to his credit, for having founded and ably edited first newspaper titled 'Wattan' in Kashmiri language in 1960s;
9. Mr. Bansi Lal Kohistani (aged 61) an eminent social activist and writer, for original contribution as a long-time investigative reporter of the rural scenario;
10. Kumari Shanta Bharti (aged 69) a well-known social worker, and Kumari Shakuntala Seth (aged 69), a dedicated educationist, for their pioneering work in developing Hindi Journalism as contemporaries through their journals entitled 'Bharti' and 'Usha' respectively published from Jammu before partition;
11. Mr. D.N. Dutta (aged 85) for his notable contribution as the eldest press photographer in the State;
12. Mr. Meraj-ud-Dun (aged 30) for his outstanding contribution in the development of photo journalism in Kashmir.

MEMORIAL AWARD

A special awards worth Rs. 3000/- was instituted in memory of 'Father of Journalism' to be given annually to a reporter working in Jammu & Kashmir for any of the mass media for outstanding performance in the preceding year. Early in 1990, a 3-member panel was set up comprising Mr. Balraj Puri, Mr. G.D. Sharma and Mrs. Rachna Vinod for selecting an awardee for the year 1989. In terms of recommendation by the panel, however, the award was equally shared by three journalists as mentioned below:

1. Mr. Ajeet Singh,
   AIR reporter in Jammu
2. Mr. Yusuf Jameel,
   'Telegraph' reporter in Srinagar
3. Mr. George Joseph,
   'Indian Express' reporter for Kashmir

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It may be pointed out that the panel had in its unanimous report stated inter alia: "The selection was in no way an easy task... The situation of Jammu and Srinagar had not been entirely similar during 1989 from the point of view of news-reporting. Again the requirements of different categories of media-print as well as electronic-varied each medium with its own set of rules for reporting. In the final analysis, however, we were able to see a common thread of a nose for news, its presentation, the positive mind, the unbiased approach, the skill and the style bind such presentation and the general impression that reporter leaves on his or her discerning readers, viewers and listeners. All this does distinguish one reporter from the other".

RECEPTION FOR EMINENT EDITOR

On May 1, 1990, the Trust honoured Mr. Ved Bhasin on his 60th birthday for achieving "distinction of having developed 'Kashmir Times' (English) and 'Dainik Kashmir times' (Hindi) as prestigious dailies and good avenues of training local youngmen and women as journalists". A large number of citizen complimented the eminent editor at an impressive but solemn reception.

NEW LOW IN JOURNALISM

The news-reporting in Jammu and Kashmir was, however, to touch a new low in 1990. There were frequent cross-firings between the security forces and the militants throughout the year. The dastardly murder of Maulana Mohd Saeed Masoodi, the most distinguished awardee of the Trust, virtually in his sick-bed, was symbolic of the vitiated atmosphere gripping the State. In 1991, therefore, the panel could not nominate any news-reporter working in Jammu and Kashmir for the memorial award for the preceding year. The trustees eventually resolved to keep it in abeyance "till the restoration of better conditions for journalists to function without threat of their physical liquidation".

Dr. KARAN SINGH'S ROLE LAUDED

Towards the close of the year 1991 the Trust decided to confer recognition on Dr. Karan Singh as an outstanding journalist "for having done so much and so well for propagation of highest spiritual and moral values through print and electronic media at home and abroad and for his initiative in introducing Journalism course in Bharatiya Vidya bhawan Sri Pratap Memorial College of Communication and Management, Jammu, besides bringing out the quarterly 'Dharma Marg' journals in Hindi and English.

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VETERNS IN JAMMU HONOURED

Even as the media continued to face a grim situation in the Kashmir Valley, the Trust gave away awards to the following journalists in Jammu for their signal contribution in various fields at a well-attended Get-Together on April 8, 1992:

Mr. B.P. Sharma (aged 83), Free-lance
"To him belongs the distinction of being the doyen of fraternity of journalists in J&K whose pen remains as robust as ever covering both the print and electronic media for the last 65 years with a telling effect."

Mr. Balraj Puri (64), Free-lance
"A relentless fighter for the freedom of the press as well as all human rights. This is the golden jubilee year of his ceaseless pursuit of Truth as an eminent journalist".

Mr. Mohan Yawar (63), Editor daily 'Raftar'
"Starting with Mr. Balraj Puri as co-editor of local weekly 'Pukar' when both were under 14, he made writing his life-long passion and has been running his weekly-turned-daily 'Raftar' for last about three decades. This is his golden jubilee year as a journalist."

Master Roshan Lal (78), Editor daily 'Sach'
"As associate of the renowned freedom-fighter late Raja Mohd Akbar Khan who was founder-editor of weekly 'Sach' (Mirpur) his active interest in journalism now spans almost six decades with unabated emphasis on communal harmony and uplift of ordinary-folks.

Sardar Raghubir Singh 'Mukt' (78), Editor daily 'Quomi Awaz'
"There is no looking back for him as an unassuming and hard-working journalist ever since he made a start with his weekly 'Siyassat' (Poonch) 1937, with an unblemished record of 55 years' devotion to the noble profession".

Sardar Ajit Singh (76),
Editor weekly 'Kashmir Transport'
"He gave up Government service in 1959 and took to journalism as a mission to serve the oppressed and the suppressed, which he has been doing in a simple and straight manner".

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Mr. Ved Pal 'Deep' (63),
of Kashmir Times Group

"A versatile genius and a long-time associate of the 'Kashmir Times' group of publications, his journalistic connection in Urdu, Hindi, English and Dogri languages for the past about forty years has been remarkable in ways more than once".

Mrs. Padma Sachdev (52), Free-lance

"The most distinguished Dogri poetess, her contributions as a journalist-writer to prestigious Hindi periodicals as as a popular interviewer for Radio and TV are widely acclaimed".

Mr. Gopal Sachar (65), Press Correspondent

"Starting as a political activist, he was drawn to journalism as a full-timer around forty years ago and is presently representing 'Hind Samachar' group conscientiously".

Mr. C.B. Kaul (48), Press Correspondent

"With almost 25 years of reliable reporting to his credit, he is at present representing 'Pioneer' in J&K. A member of the Central Press Accreditation Committee, he is also a champion of working journalists and heads their State Union".

Mr. G.D. Gupta (82), Editor weekly 'Azad'

"Soon after retirement as a senior Government officer, he started his weekly which has been spotlighting issues of public importance constructively for the last 26 years. He has set up an example which may well be emulated by competent retired personnel with advantage to themselves and to the people at large".

Mr. S.R. Sudhir (61), Editor weekly 'Nawai Duggar'

"A forward-looking political enthusiast, he wields a powerful pen as well. His interest, in journalism dates back to earlier than 1969 when he started 'Nawai Duggar' known for its support to larger social causes".

Mr. Yash Bhasin (58), Editor fortnightly 'Panorama'

"A dedicated politician for long years, he finally emerged as a popular columnist for several prestigious periodicals and is now publishing his independent English journal for the last about 7 years creditably".

Mr. Des Raj 'Danish' (57), Editor weekly 'Charhta Suraj'

"Journalism and versification came to him rather naturally as his sensitive mind reacted to the hard struggle against extreme adversity early in life. His weekly has been playing an important role in mobilizing public opinion against social evils for almost two decades".

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Dr. Jitendra Singh (37), Free-lance

"A dramatist, broadcaster and short story writer, he has made his mark as an outstanding columnist and medical journalist with a lucid style and deep concern for the down-trodden".

Mr. K. Kumar Bakshi (71), Photo journalist

"Retirement from Government as senior camera officer in 1976 actually served to sharpen his talent as a credible press lensman thus also bringing multi-faceted life in Jammu on the small screen with considerable effect".

Mrs. Imrana Abbas (46), Editor-in-Chief daily 'Sandesh'

"Following the sudden demise of her distinguished father-in-law Syed Nazir Hussain Shah Samnani in 1973, she had to shoulder the onerous task of running 'Sandesh' which she has done successfully".

Mr. Arun Kumar (31), Press Correspondent

"Amongst the young local journalists he has fast come up as a promising news reporter with an exemplary sense of duty".

STUDENT AWARDEES

In 1980s Journalism classes had been started both at the University of Kashmir, Srinagar, and Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan Sri Pratap Memorial College of Communication and Management, Jammu. The Trust resolved to give awards to those securing first positions in both course every year—since their inception. While the University of Kashmir is yet to be co-operative, the following from the Jammu College have been thus awarded:

1.	Mr. Ajeet Singh	:	1983-84
2.	Miss Manisha Jatinder	:	1984-85
3.	Miss Kanchan Sharma	:	1985-86
4.	Mr. Jaswant Singh Jamwal	:	1986-87
5.	Mr. Mohinder Pal	:	1987-88
6.	Mr. Krishan K. Bamzai	:	1988-89
7.	Major N.S. Salathia	:	1989-90
8.	Miss Arti Sharma	:	1990-91
9.	Mr. R. Manivarnan	:	1991-92
10.	Mr. Nitish Arora	:	1992-93
11.	Miss Kavita Suri	:	1993-94

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12.	Mr Sanjeev Kumar Nargotra	:	1994-95
13.	Ravinder Kumar Bhat	:	1995-96
14.	Mr. Harbans Singh	:	1996-97
15.	Mr. Jagmohan Sharma	:	1997-98
16.	Mr. Vivek Puri	:	1998-99
17.	Ms. Komal Kapoor	:	1999-2000
18.	Praduman Krishan Raina	:	2000-2001
19.	Ms. Hema Gandotra	:	2001-2002

BEST ALL-ROUNDERS OF SAMBA

To encourage student community in their home town to strive for excellence the founding trustees had specifically provided in the Trust Deed to awards annual prizes to one male and one female adjudged "Best all-rounder of the year" in Samba. Accordingly the following scholars have been given prizes during the period under review:

1985-86	1.	Mr. Vikas Vir s/o Mr. Ram Singh
	2.	Miss Rekha Gupta d/o Mr. Raj Kumar Gupta
1986-87	1.	Miss Surekha d/o Mr. Mulk Raj Gupta
	2.	Mr. Veneet Kumar s/o Mr. Prem P. Gupta
1987-88	1.	Mr. Anand Kumar Gupta s/o Mr. Kuldip Raj Gupta
	2.	Miss Bindiya Rani d/o Mr. Romesh Lal
188-89	1.	Miss Menu Pargal d/o Mr. Kuldip Lal Pargal
	2.	Sushil Kumar Sharma s/o Mr. Sudesh K. Sharma

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1989-90	1.	Mr. Parveen Tagotra s/o Bimal K. Tagotra
	2.	Miss Sharmila d/o Mr. Gian Chand
1990-91	1.	Mr. Surrinder Misra s/o Mr. P.N. Misra
	2.	Miss Archna Kumar d/o Mr. Om Prakash Sing
1991-92	1.	Mr. Sunil Kumar
	2.	Neeru Samyal
1992-93	1.	Mr. Dheeraj Gupta
	2.	Alka Dogra
1993-94	1.	Miss Mridu Salathia
	2.	Miss Seema Sambyal.
1994-95	1.	Master Devinder Singh
	2.	Miss Rachna Gupta
1995-96	1.	Miss Sunayana.
	2.	Mr. Vipul Saraf.
1996-97	1.	Miss Monica Jamwal.
	2.	Mr. Vikas Sambyal.
1987-98	1.	Miss Komal Gupta
	2.	Mr. Suneel Singh
1998-99	1.	Mr. Mannu Hansa
	2.	Ms. Deepati Jasrotia
1999-2000	1.	Ms. Rachna Gupta
	2.	Mr. Parveen Kumar
2000-2001	1.	Ms. Anshu Chauhan
	2.	Mr. Rajesh Kumar Chandel
2001-2002	1.	Ms. Supeeti Gupta

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Gandhi Memorial College Of Education, Bantalab, Jammu

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

Ever since its inception in 1985 the Trust has been making annual donations to the following institutions carrying on various charitable activities:

1. Indian Cancer Society, E. Borges Marg, Parel, , Bombay-12:
2. All India Mahajan Shiromani Sabha, 3774, Subhash Marg, Daryaganj, Delhi 2;
3. Indian Red Cross Society, Jammu Region, Kachi Chhawni, Jammu;
4. Association SOS Chiildren's village (Balgram) Chhani Rama, Jammu;
5. Home for the Aged & Infirm, Ved Mandir Jammu;
6. Shri Ved Mandir Bal Niketan, Jammu;
7. J&K Samaj Kalyan Kendra, Shaheedi Chowk, Jammu;
8. Viklang Chhatra Trust, Akhnoor.
9. JRC Jammu Since 1996-97.
10. National Federation of Blinds, Ved Mandir, Jammu
11. Kusht Nivaran society, Jammu
12. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam Welfare Society, Jammu
13. J&K Yateem Trust,Srinagar

Donations have also been made to Armenia Relief Fund, J&K National Calamaties Relief Fund and Indian Leprosy Foundation, Bombay.

After passing away of the sernior trustee of the Jamna Devi Gian Devi Saraf Trust, the surviving trustee of the Jamna Devi Gian Devi Saraf Trust, Mr. Om Prakash Saraf nominated Mrs Rachna Vinod, his youngest daughter, to fill the vacancy as a trustee the JDGD Trust, Jammu on March 24, 1989.

Concluding, it may be mentioned that the Trust accounts are subject to strict regular audit. For any particulars one may write to or contact personally Mrs. Rachna Vinod, Trustee, JDGD Saraf Trust, 38-D, C/C, Gandhi Nagar, Jammu (PC 180004), J&K—India, Phone: 32670.

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A CODE OF CONDUCT

In the legacy of Lala Mulk Raj Saraf is a letter from his old school teacher-turned journalist Mr. Rattan Lal Mohan. After resigning from Government service, he had settled in Lahore where he became the most popular free-lance under the pen-name of 'An Unknown Journalist'. On seeing the first issue of 'Ranbir' with his old pupil as its Editor, Mr. Mohan sent him this letter dated July 1, 1924, which "I still cherish the most" wrote Lala Mulk Raj Saraf in his autobiography in 1967. The sound advice has hardly lost an iota for the journalists even today after the lapse of around 70 years.

"The sturdy infant shall one day rise to the full proportions of a highly developed institution and you cannot be too careful to bestow your undivided attention to its growth. Let your tone be serious rather than idealistic, practical rather than commonplace and sympathetic rather than hypercritical. But guard yourself against being too grave, pontifical and patriarchal. Infuse humour into your notes, make them light but not flippant. Be always on the side of law, order and constitutionalism. Let your style be vigorous not flamboyant; simple, not jejune; direct, not blunt; let it strike a happy medium between the plain and the ornate. Do not use such words as 'sansnikhez' (sensational), which is nonsense. Study regularly some high class Urdu journals as the Zamindar or some other magazines. Make a discriminating use of new terms of speech. Do not let the passion get the better of your reason. You cannot leanse the world of its evil by a stroke of the pen, however vigorous it may be. Remember to climb down from the cloudland of ideals to hard facts. Never permit your criticism to be bitter or one-sided. Needless to add that you know the intention of the Defamation Act. Do not publish unauthorized communications. But I need not play the part of a preacher to you. Your qualifications, public spirit and the stern integrity of your motives shall make you equal to the exigencies of journalistic life I wish you the best of luck, Cheerio".

Freedom Even To Commit Mistakes

Early in 1977 Mr. L.K. Advani, presently the Opposition leader in the Indian Parliament, had assumed office as the Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting, with Mr. Morarji Desai as Prime Minister. Felicitating Mr. Advani, Lala Mulk Raj Saraf wrote to him on March 25, 1977: 'We journalists here, as elsewhere, regard this as a befitting appointment for an ace journalist as you undoubtedly have been. Let me also assert in all humility that we people would not be satisfied with merely going back to pre-Emergency days: we want full freedom even to commit mistakes to learn and unlearn thereby without any interference.

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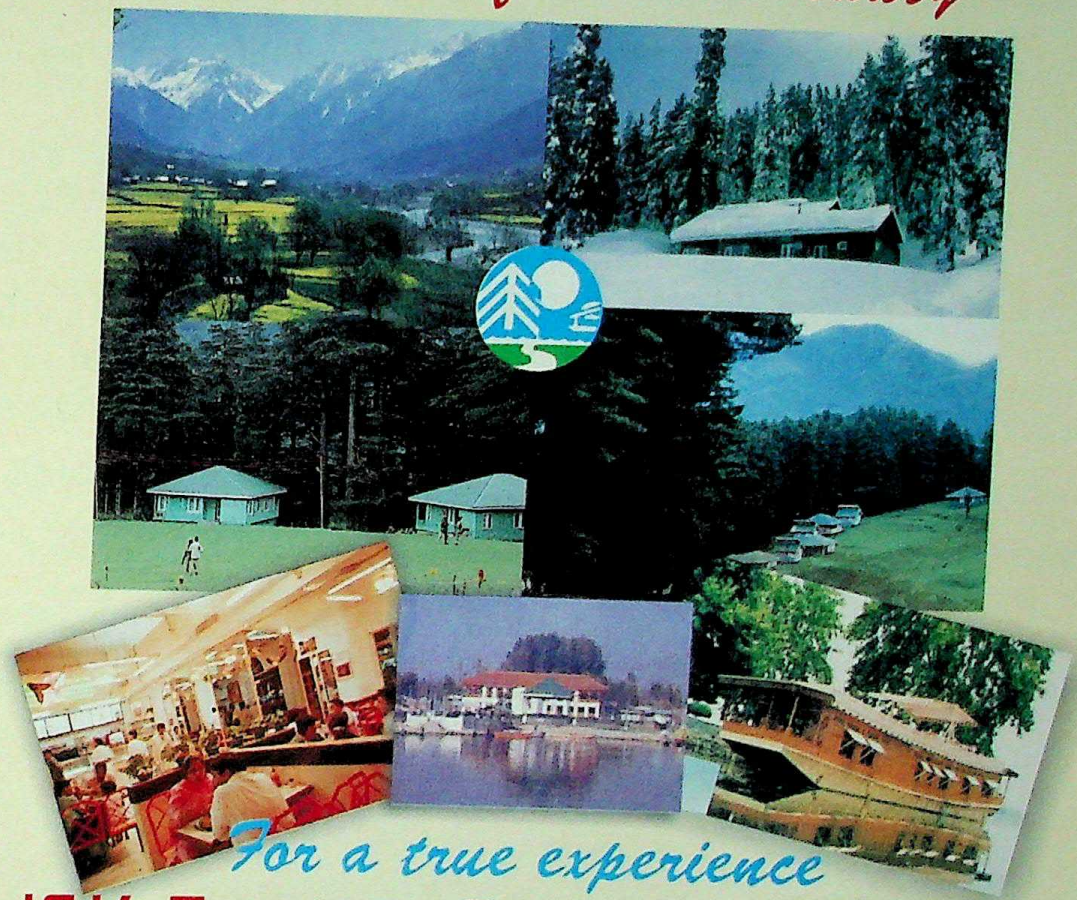

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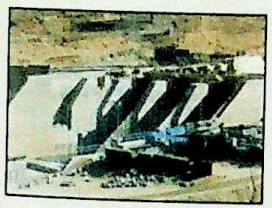

Baspa Project– 300 MW (H.P)

Baglihar Project – 450 MW (J&K)

Jaypee Rewa Cement (MP)

Jaypee Palace Hotel, (Agra)

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Company At A Glance :

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(On Build Own and Operate Basis)

The Group is setting up three major projects totalling 1700 MW, at:

- Baspa, H.P. 300 MW
- Vishnuprayag,Uttranchal. 400 MW
- Karcham Wangtoo,H.P. 1000 MW

Total 1700MW

CIVIL ENGINEERING & CONSTRUCTION

River Valley Hydro Projects in hand	Capacity (MW)
Dul-hasti, J&K	390
Baglihar,J&K	450
Chamera-II,H.P	300
Nathpa-Jhakri, HP	1500
Tehri Dam, Uttranchal	750
IndiraSagar, MP	1000
SardarSarovar,Gujarat	1450
Tala,Bhutan	1020
TeestaStageV ,WB	500
Total	7360

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The group has three plants at Jaypee Nagar, Rewa, M.P.

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The group owns four 5-star hotels:

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The Group has set up an information technology and software company, with development centre, near Delhi, providing software solutions and products for a host of business areas:

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- Institute of engineering technology, Guna, M.P.

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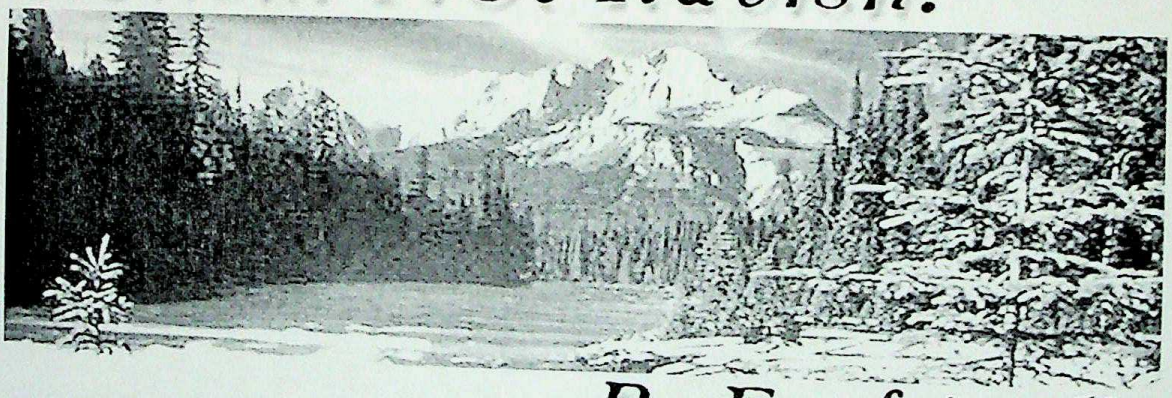

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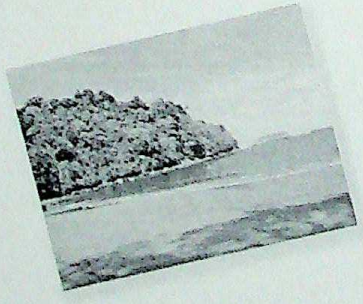
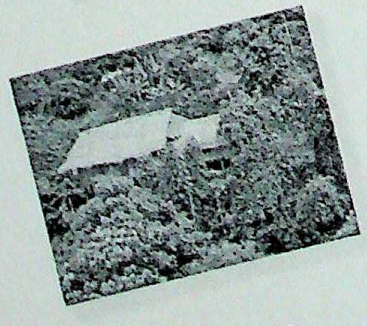
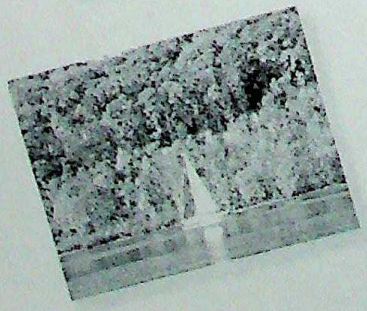
Nature has indeed been generous to mankind. It has given us endless bounties like landscapes & forests, mountains & beaches, birds & wildlife and above all, it's own system to maintain ecological balance.

While enjoying these bounties, it's incumbent upon us to leave them unpolluted for others to relish them too!

Let's take a pledge that we shall -







- Use only recycled paper for stationery
- Not use polythene bags
- Use alternate energy wherever possible
- Dispose off garbage in a responsible manner
- Recycle water by adopting treatment systems
- Conserve animal & bird life in our surroundings
- Encourage planting and greening of environment
- Adopt ethnic architecture and local material for construction
- Generate employment for local communities
- Limit deforestation - No open fires
- Encourage spread of saplings of local plants
- Leave camp-sites clean - Dispose off biodegradable litter properly
- Keep local water clean
- Leave plants alone in their natural habitat.
- Respect local cultures
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"Lala Mulk Raj Saraf has always associated himself with largaer social causes of constructive character. With his long and distinguished service in the cause of journalism, he is rightly regarded as the Father of Journalism in J & K."

Fakru-ud-din Ali Ahmed

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B.D. Jatti greeting Lala Mulk Raj Saraf

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"Lala Mulk Raj Saraf has served the people of Jammu and Kashmir with devotion".

— *Indira Gandhi*

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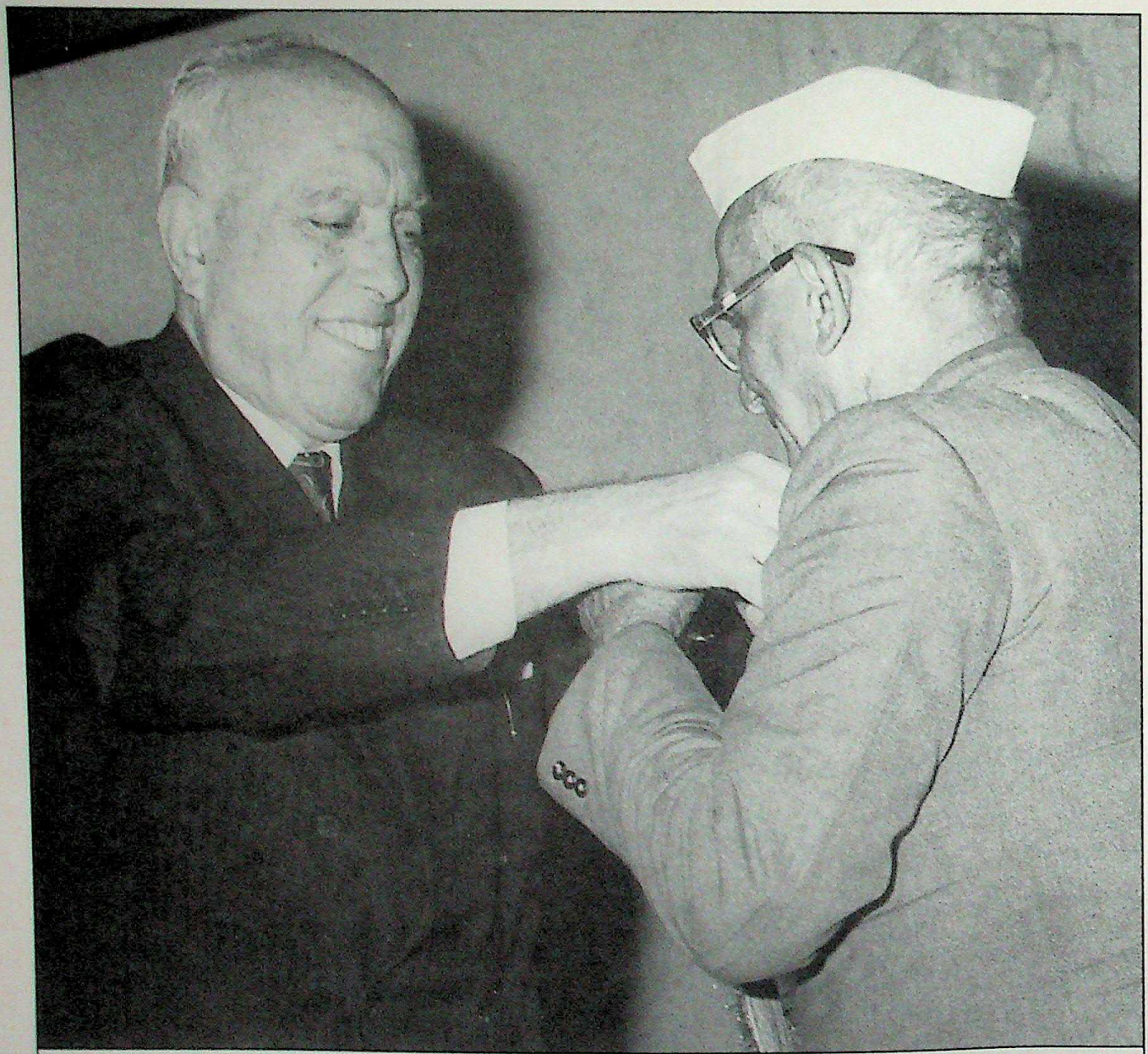

"The 'Ranbir' has been leader of thought in many matters and I testify that many dreams it has dreamt, have come true."

– Sheikh Abdullah

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Shri Bhagwan Sahay, Governor, Jammu & Kashmir presenting State Award to Shri Mulk Raj Saraf on the Republic Day 1968.

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Mr. Bhagwan Sahay, the then Governor of the State and Chancellor of the University of Jammu, receiving from Lala Mulk Raj Saraf the first volume of his newspaper, "RANBIR" (1924-1925, as a symbolic gift of rare collection of all his papers and writings to the University, at an impressive presentation ceremony held at the University Campus on March 18, 1971.

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"If the study of my trials and turmoils, successes and failures may enable any journalist to discover himself even to a slight degree and lead him on the road —

Though long and dreary
To foot it bravely, strong or weary –

I would consider my labour amply rewarded.

.... MRS

Leading protest in Srinagar against atrocities on journalists' by military rulers in Pakistan

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At International Organisation of Journalists' Conference in Helsinki.

In the hey day of "Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai" with Chinese Prime Minister Zhou-en-Lai in Beijing.

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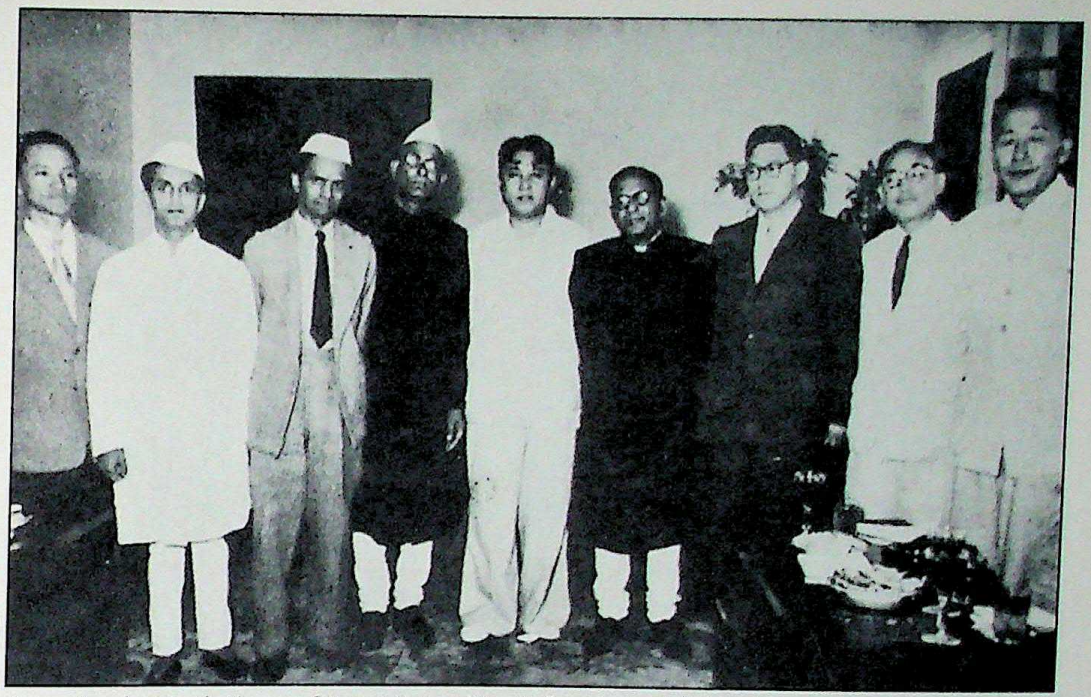
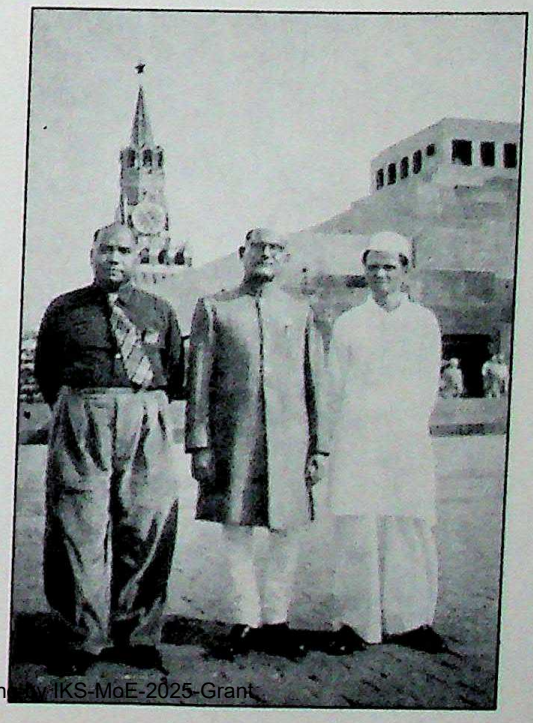


Reception by North Korean Prime Miniser Kim iL Sungh (middle) in Pyongyang, The Capital of N. Korea (July 25, 1956)



In front of the Lenin Mausoleum, Red Square, Moscow (June 20, 1956)

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At the Anti-Defamation Bill rally (facing camera) in Srinagar being addressed by Mr. Om Prakash Saraf

(from right to leff) Kh. G.M. Sadiq, Mr. Tek Chand Dhingra, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Shri Sewak Ram Basar, Pt. Prem Nath Bazaz, Pt. Prem Nath Dhar, Lala Mulk Raj Saraf, Ch. Gian Chand Sadabarti, Maulana Mohd. Sayeed Massoodi, Mr. Waqar Ambalvi, Editor, Ehsan, Lahore and Mr. Ghulam Mohd. Jeweller, at an ''at home'' in Lahore after the Ludhiana Session of the All India States' People's Conference in the middle of February, 1939.

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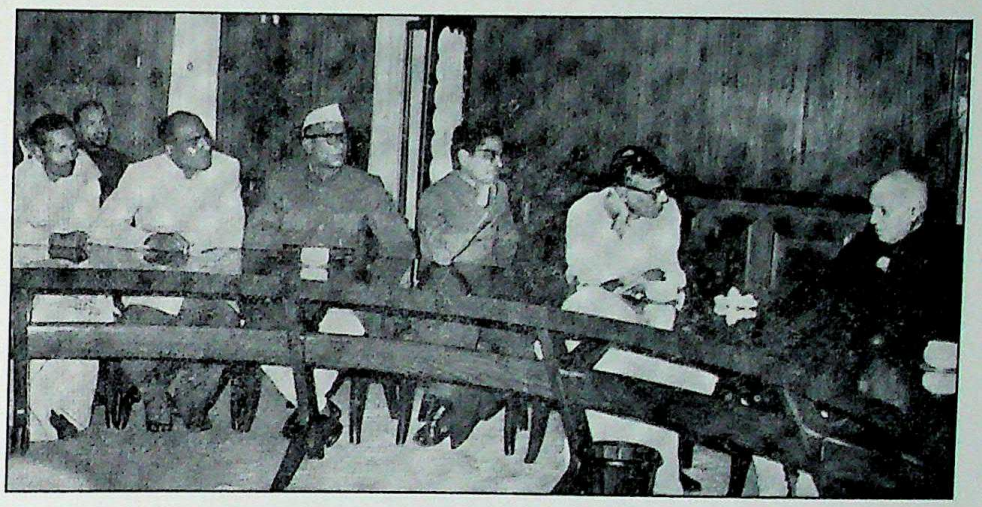
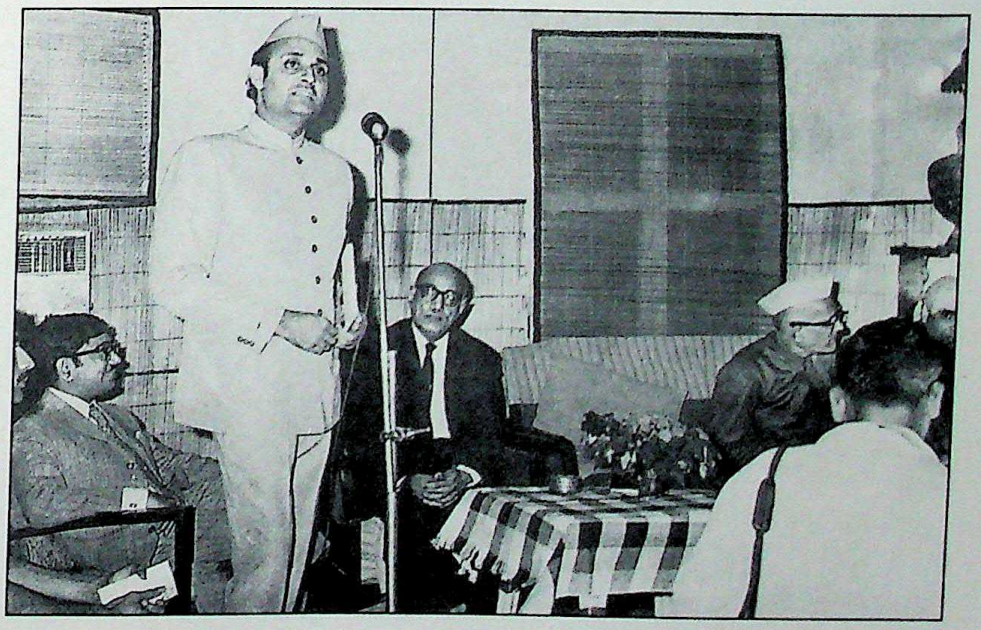


With Jawaharlal Nehru, as member of the Executive of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists.



Release of "Jammu Darshan" at Press Club of India, New Delhi. Dr. Karan Singh speaking on the occasion. The others in the picture are (from right) Om Mehta, former Minister of State for Home, Lalaji, Kanwar Rajendra Singh

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Two legendary figures, Lalaji and Pandit Premnath Dogra, meet at a party hosted by well-known film producer-director Ramanand Sagar (in the middle)

Former Governor Mody welcoming Lalaji

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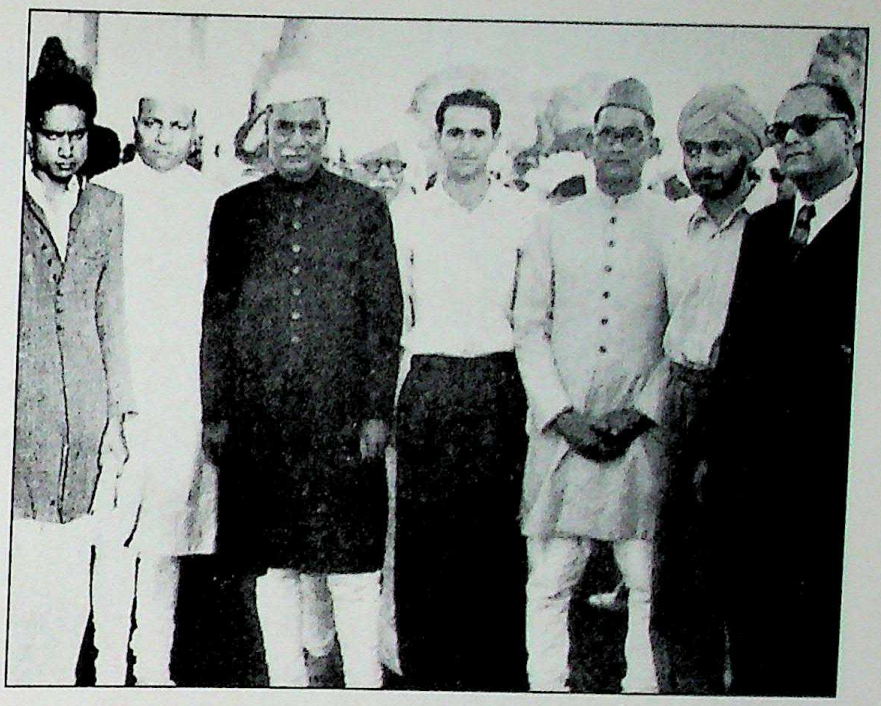
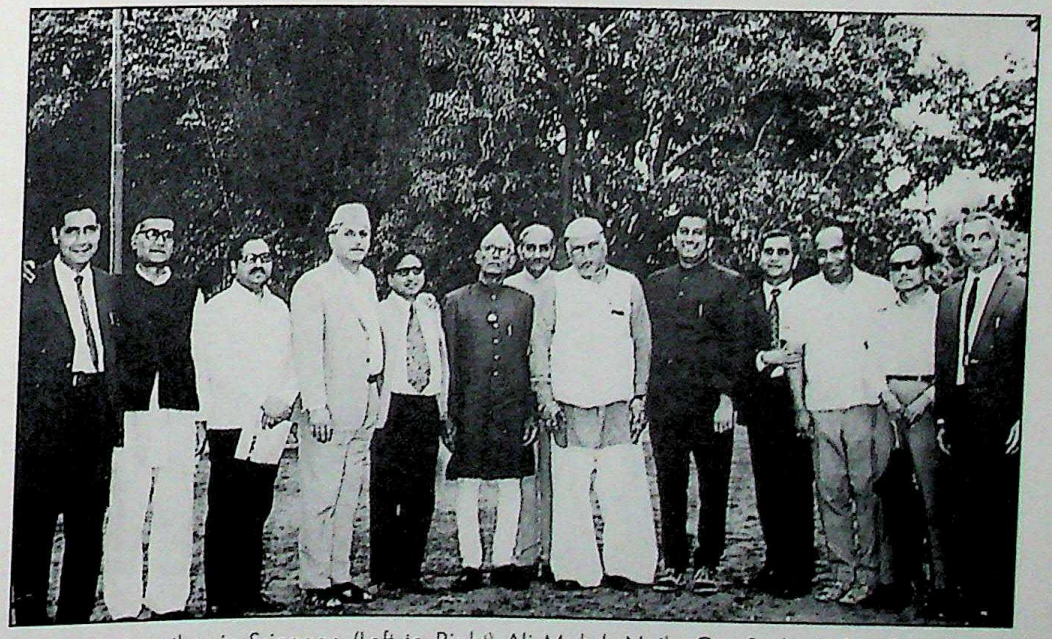


With Dr. Rajendra Parsad, as leader of the Dogri Sanstha Delegation which participated in the All India Cultural Conference (March 17 and 18, 1951) and displayed masterpieces of Dogra School of Paintings in Dewan-e-Khas,, Red Fort, Delhi



At a get – together in Srinagar. (Left to Right) Ali Mohd. Naik, Om Prakash Saraf, Mubarak Shah, Balraj Puri, Mulk Raj Saraf, B.P. Sharma, Girdhari Lal Dogra,Randhir Singh, Ved Bhasin, Ved Gupta,D.C. Parshant, G.D. Sharma.

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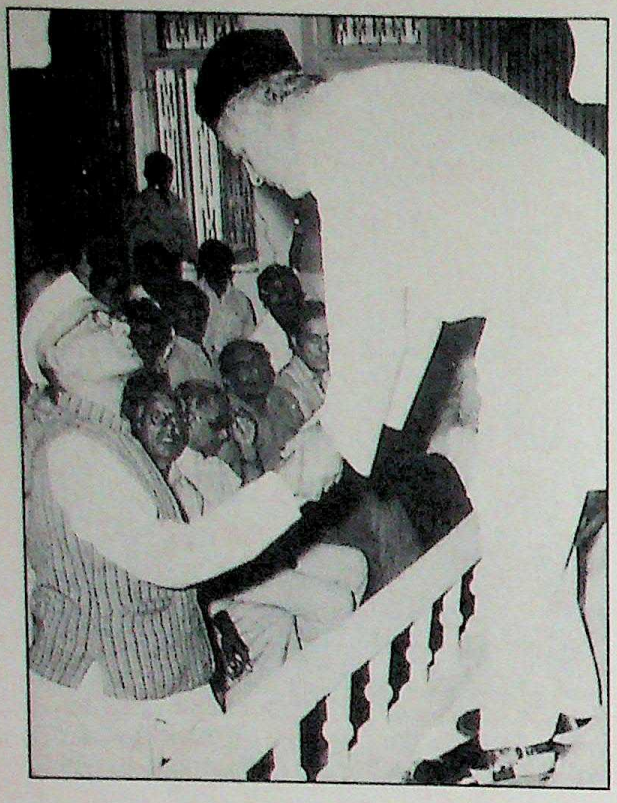

Farooq Abdullah walks up to Lalaji to receive him at a function

As a distinguished invitee to the J&K State Peoples' Conference convened by Sheikh Mohd Abdullah to find out a solution of Kashmir Problem in Mujahid Manzil, Srinagar

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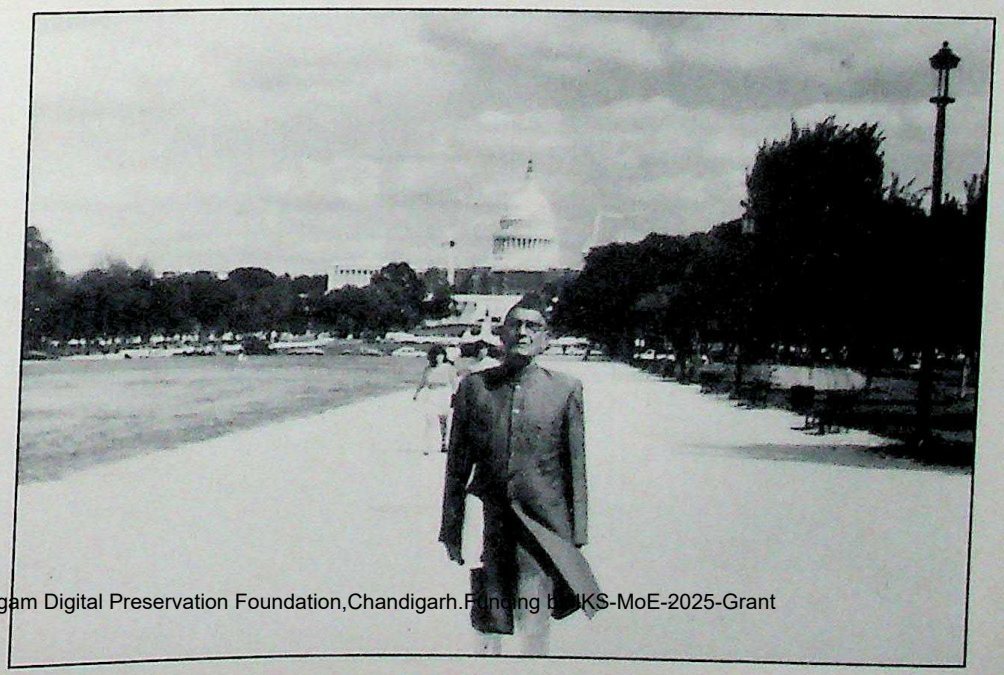
With writers from Pakistan who visited Kashmir, at a reception hosted by Kashmir Journalists in their Honour



On visit to Capital Hill (US Congress Head Quarter in Washington at the age of 92).

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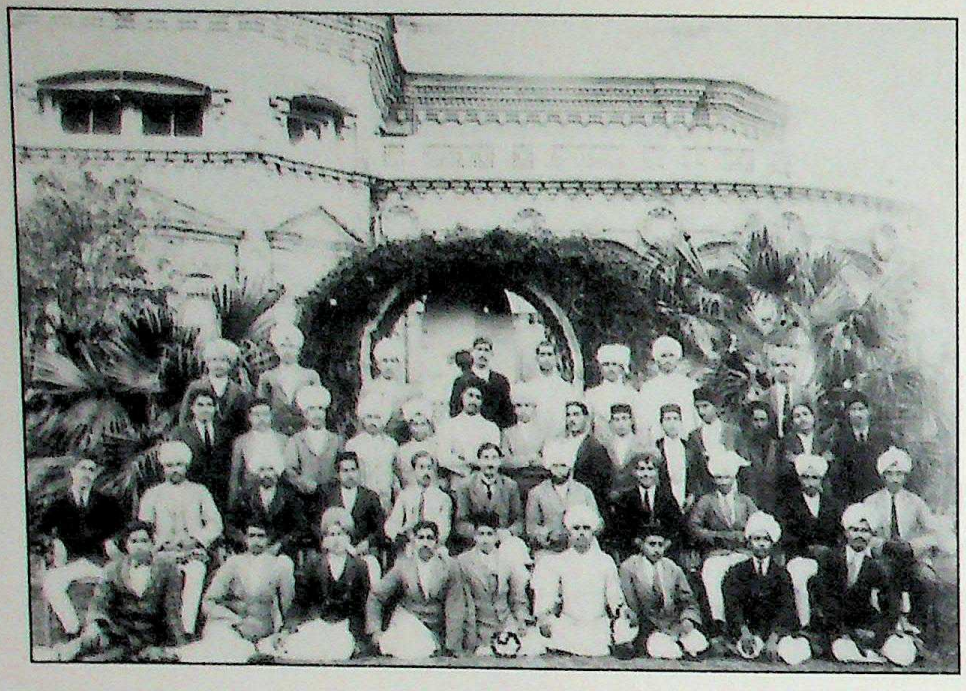
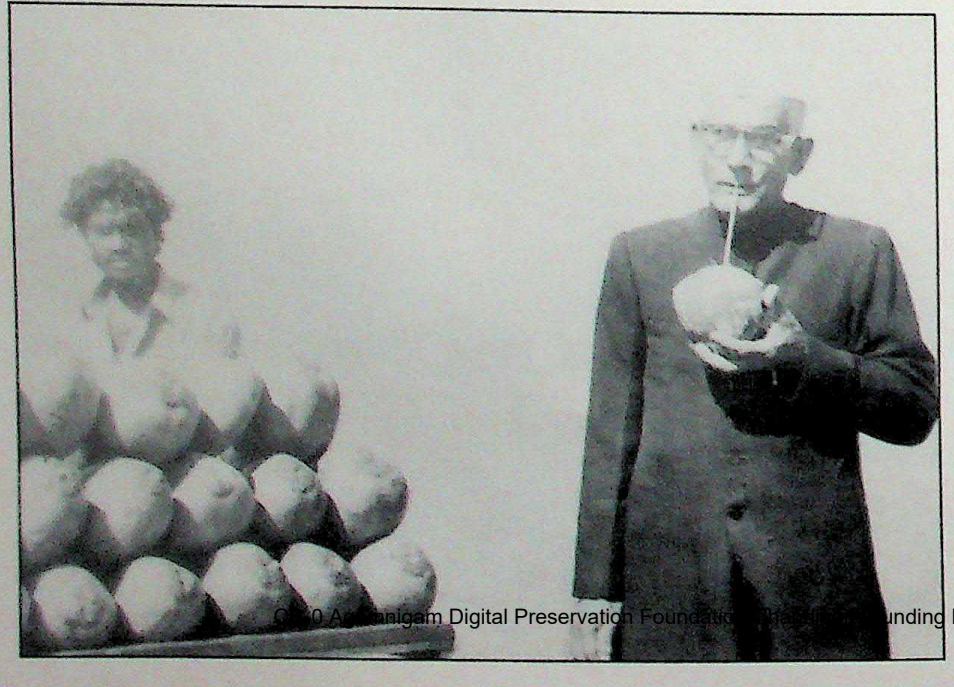


As a college student, bare-headed in the middle of the last standing row along with his tutorial group in 1918 in then Prince of Wales College now Gandhi Memorial Science College.



Enjoying coconut juice during evening walk at Juhu Beach in Bombay which he visited every winter and where he finally passed away on Feb. 21, 1989 at the age of 95.

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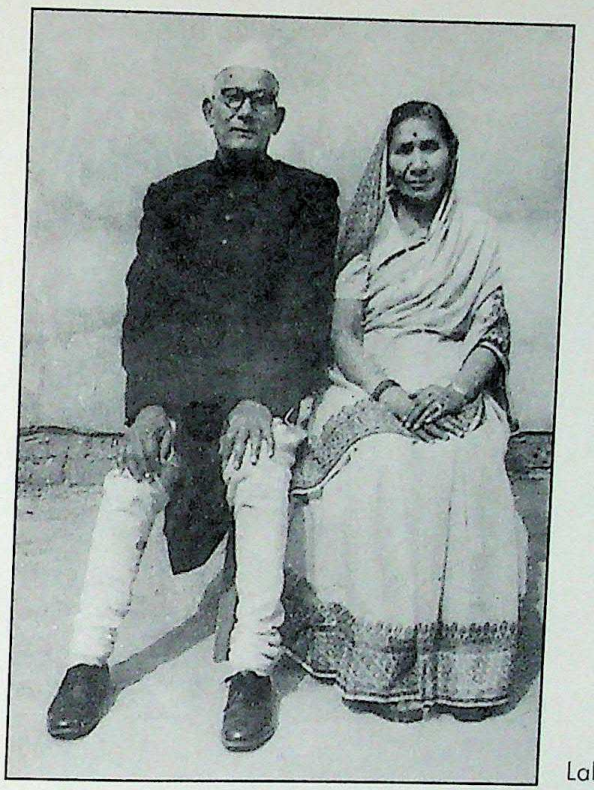

Lala Mulk Raj Saraf with wife Smt. Gian Devi

A family photograph (1934) with sons and a daughter. His youngest & 5th son was born two years later.

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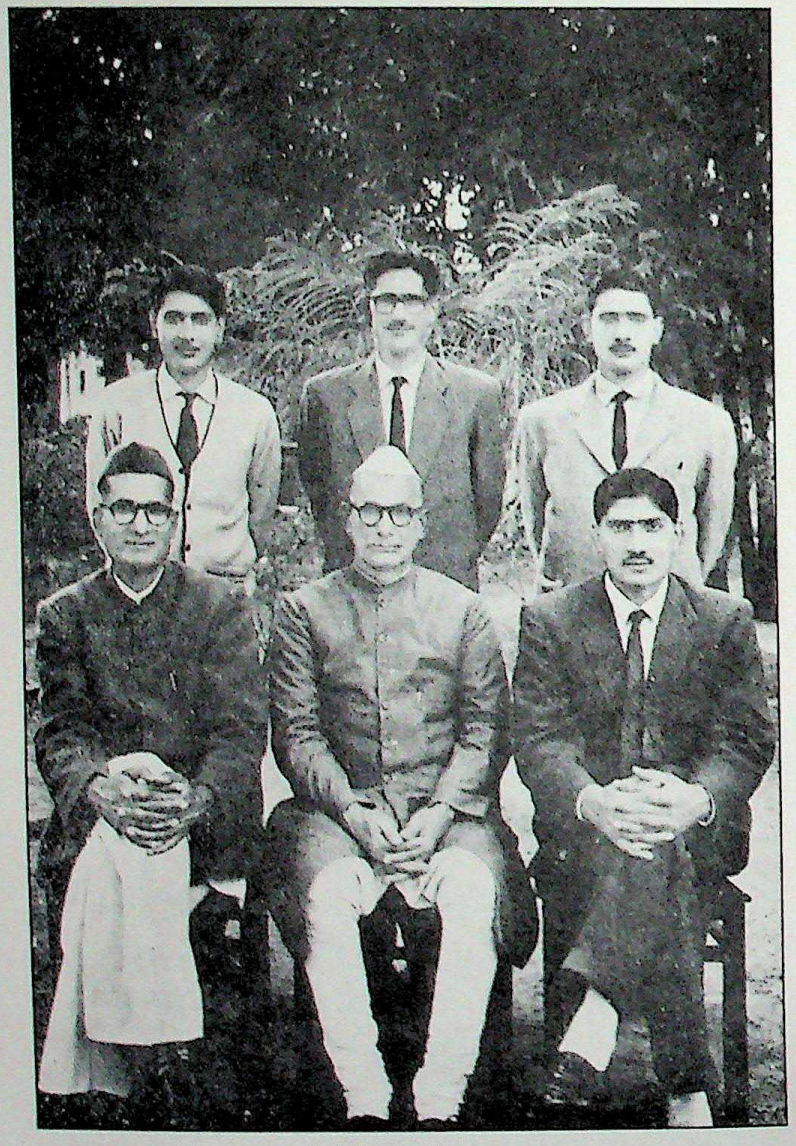

Lalaji with his sons
Left to right (Sitting) Om, Suraj,
(standing) Ved, Prem, Sat

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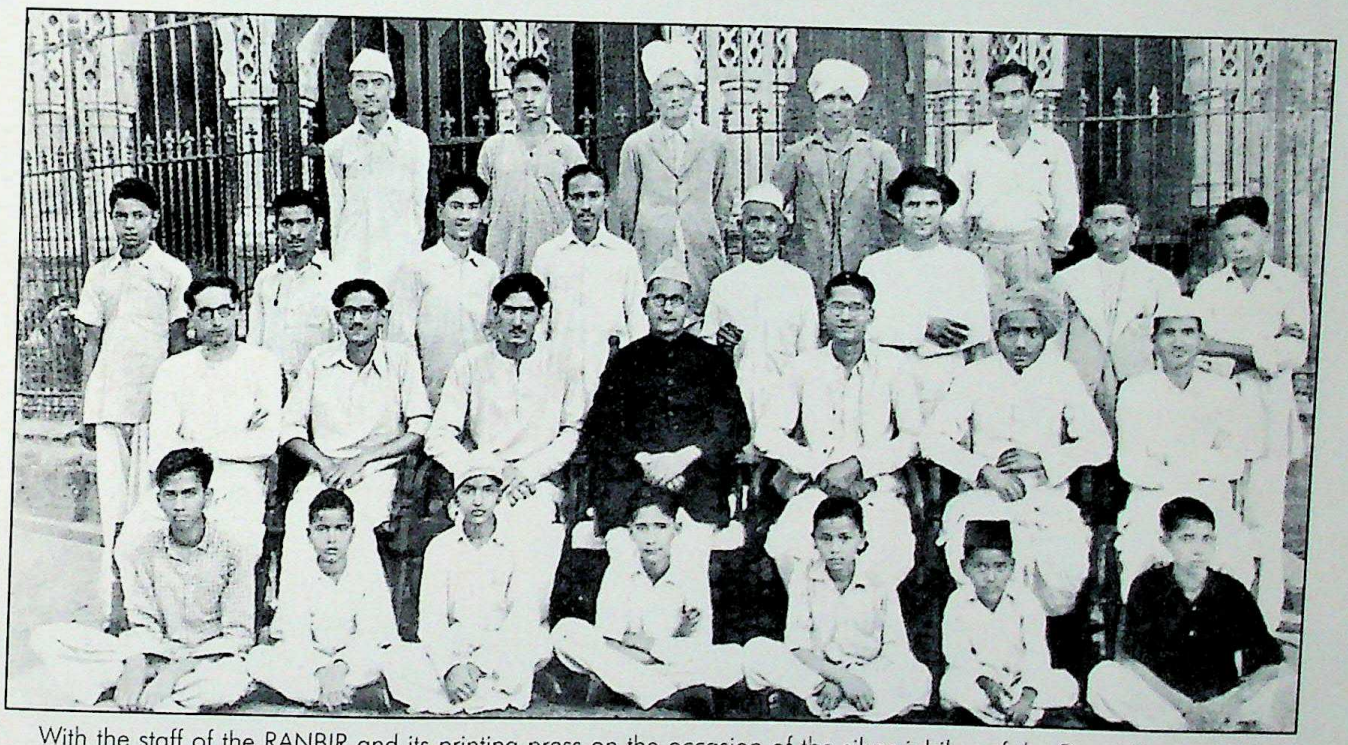

With the staff of the RANBIR and its printing press on the occasion of the silver jubilee of the Paper (June 1949)

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Being honoured at IFWJ meet at Srinagar, 21.9.1986

On May 1, 1990, the Trust honoured Mr. Ved Bhasin on his 60th birthday for achieving "distinction of having developed 'Kashmir Times' (English) and 'Dainik Kashmir times' (Hindi) as prestigious dailies and good avenues of training local youngmen and women as journalists". A large number of citizens attended the function in an impressive but solemn reception. (From left to right) Rachna Vinod Trustee JDGD Saraf Trust, S.D. Rohmetra Editor Excelsior, Om Prakash Saraf Senior Trustee, Ved Bhasin.

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LALA MULK RAJ SARAF
1894-1989

1918

1927

1931

1934

1936

1938

1943

1949

1953

1969

1979

1989

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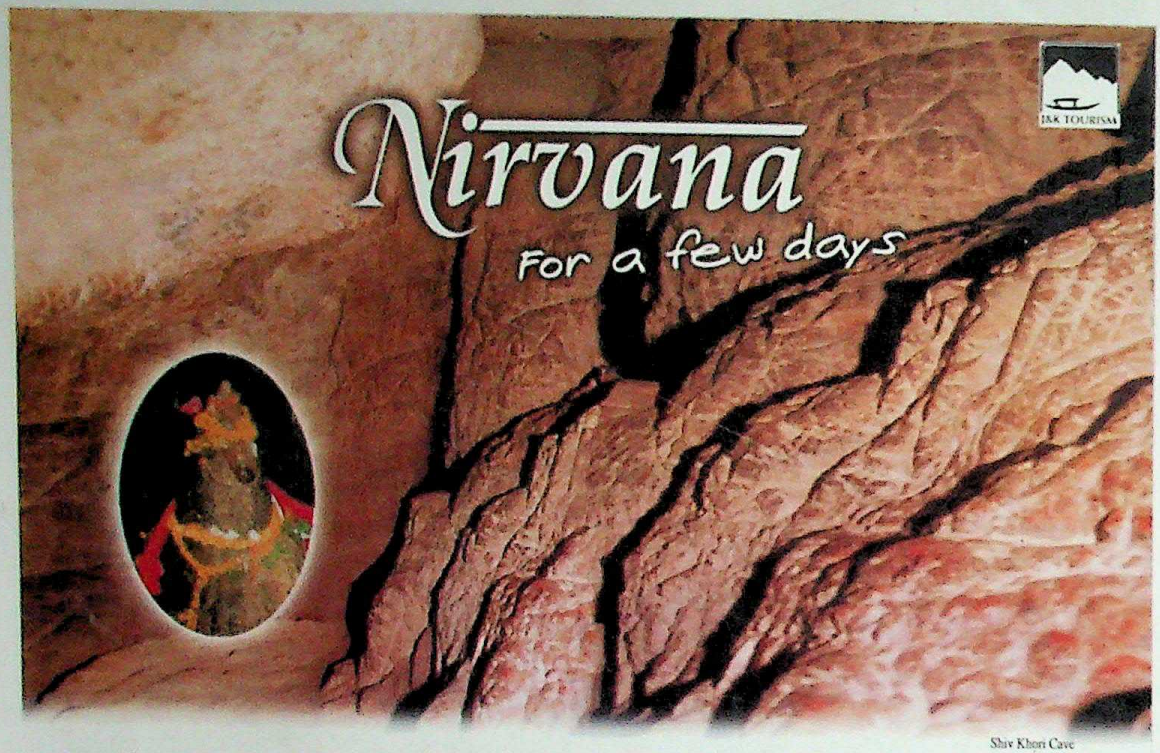


Shiv Khori Cave

Get away from the hectic pace of life... to a world of deep, divine faith, spiritual peace and vibrant history. In and around Jammu.

SHIV KHORI

Just 79 kms from Katra, this 1-km long holy cave is worshipped second only to Amarnathji by the devotees of Shiva. A 4-feet high, natural Shivling and idols of various gods & goddesses adorn it. A magnificent 'mela' is held here every year on Shivratri. One can easily club a visit to Shiv Khori after the pilgrimage to Vaishnodevi.

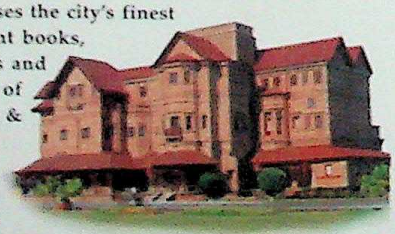
Purmandal Temple

PURMANDAL

The Purmandal Temple Complex, only 40 kms from Jammu on the national highway to Pathankot, has ancient temples which are revered by all Shaivites of Kashmir Valley. Built on the banks of almost underground, sacred Devak River, its main temple is dedicated to 'Umapati'. The Complex is often referred to as 'Chotta Kashi'.

AMAR MAHAL PALACE

Reminiscent of French castles, this grand palace is steeped in Jammu's history. Now converted into a Museum, it houses the city's finest library of ancient books, Pahari paintings and family portraits of rulers of Jammu & Kashmir.



Amar Mahal

JAMMU
A Great Fly-away

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